

Dionysiac and Christian Elements in the Lysos Episode in the Greek *Alexander Romance* (β rec.)

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The Greek *Alexander Romance*, it is well known, survives not in a single, uniform text, but in several different recensions, which demonstrate the reception and adaptation of the basic text over a period of several centuries.¹ Sometimes the variation from one recension to another is almost negligible, a hardly noticeable matter of diction or vocabulary, but sometimes the changes are quite drastic, to the extent of introducing a whole series of new incidents into the story. Alexander's visit to the temple of Lysos is an example of a moderate revision of the text; it is a single, self-contained episode that is not found in the A manuscript (Parisinus graecus 1711) or either of the other witnesses to the α recension (Julius Valerius's Latin translation or the Armenian translation), but appears for the first time in the manuscripts of the β recension, and was retained in the γ recension, which was compiled somewhat later than the β.² The β recen-

sion seems to be a product of the fifth century, and reached the form in which we have it by about 500.³ It

(*antrum Liberi*), where those who enter the cave die of fever, before proceeding to the oracle of the trees of the sun and the moon; W. Boer, *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem ad Codicum Fidem Edidit et Commentario Critico Instruxit* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1973), 36–37, 81; M. Feldbusch, *Der Brief Alexanders an Aristoteles über die Wunder Indiens: Synoptische Edition* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1976), 74–75; L. Gunderson, *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle about India* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1980), 59, 150. The Bamberg manuscript of the later Italo-Latin recension of the *Letter* states, immediately after the storm, “after these things we saw the cave where Liber Pater lies sleeping” (*post haec vidimus speluncam, ubi Liber Pater iacebat*); *Epistola* (Ba) 15; ed. F. Pfister, *Kleine Texte zum Alexanderroman* (Heidelberg, 1910) 32; Gunderson, *Alexander's Letter*, 59. Although Pfister, the editor of the Bamberg manuscript, once thought that the later version was an independent translation of the Greek original, he eventually revised his opinion to consider it a recension of the earlier translation, but one that retains readings now lost from the earlier, standard version of the *Letter*; Pfister, *Kleine Texte*, ix; idem, “Zur Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem,” *AntCl* 8 (1939): 411–12; Gunderson, *Alexander's Letter*, 37. Taken together, the two versions of the Latin *Letter* suggest that in the Greek original (and in the Latin translation as it was first prepared), Alexander found in the Nysaeen Mountains of Ethiopia a cave in which Dionysus lay sleeping, and where visitors were made decidedly unwelcome; R. Stoneman, *Legends of Alexander the Great* (London, 2012), 13. This combined version of the passage seems to be a conflation of two incidents in the *Alexander Romance*: Alexander's visit to “the place where the gods dwell”—described in the Armenian translation as shimmering caves—just beyond Ethiopia (3.24) and the Lysos episode (3.28.5–10); see A. Wolohojian, *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes* (New York, 1969), 140.

3 Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, 247–48; Stoneman, *Alexander the Great*, 230–31. It is difficult to date any of the recensions

1 The whole tradition of the Greek *Alexander Romance* is surveyed in detail in C. Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses du Roman d'Alexandre: Domaine grec* (Paris, 2002). An outline of the various versions in Greek and other languages is found in R. Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (New Haven, 2008), 230–54.

2 The Lysos episode does not appear in any of the Latin translations of the *Romance*, and so does not impinge on the development of the variegated western European tradition of Alexander, with one possible exception. The *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, which survives as a separate work only in Latin translation, has Alexander, after he has encountered a fierce snowstorm, come to the coastlands of Ethiopia, and to the Nysaeen Mountains (the name is uncertain, as there is a great deal of textual variation) and the “cave of Liber”

is characterized, among other features, by expansions of the fabulous material already in the text upon which it was based, pretensions to greater historical accuracy, and intimations of a Christian interpretation—often negative—of the events of Alexander’s legendary life.⁴ As an insertion into the account of Alexander’s travels through the wonderful lands beyond the known world, the Lysos episode is certainly consistent with the first of these features. It has been explained as the *Romance*’s version of Alexander’s visit to Nysa, which is found in the historians, and so compatible with the second feature as well. But I would suggest that the Lysos episode was compiled on the basis of sources that are often identifiable as Christian no less than pagan, alludes to as much Christian as pagan material, and contains a subtly embedded message consistent with the Christian apologetics and antipagan polemic of late antiquity.

The text and translation of the passage follow:

Καὶ ἀναχωρήσαντες ἐκεῖθεν ἤλθομεν εἰς Λύσου λιμένα· καὶ εὗρομεν ὄρος ὑψηλότατον, ἐν ᾧ ἀνῆλθον καὶ εἶδον οἰκίας καλὰς χρυσίον καὶ ἀργύριον γεμούσας. εἶδον δὲ καὶ περίβολον μέγαν ἐκ σαπφείρου λίθου ἔχοντα ἀναβαθμούς ρν', καὶ ἄνωθεν ἱερὸν στρογγύλον ἔχον στύλους σαπφείρινους κύκλῳ ρ'. ἔσωθεν δὲ καὶ ἔξωθεν ἀνάγλυφοι ἀνδριάντες ἡμιθέων γεγλυμμένοι, Βάκχαι, Σάτυροι, Μύστιδες αὐλοῦσαι καὶ βακχεύουσαι διφυεῖς· ὁ δὲ πρεσβύτερος Μάρων ἐπὶ ὑποζυγίῳ ἦν. Μέσον δὲ τοῦ ναοῦ ἔκειτο κλίνη χρυσοσφύρητος ἐστρωμένη, ἐν ᾗ ἦν ἀνὴρ περιβεβλημένος σινδόνα βαμβυκίνην. καὶ τὴν μὲν μορφὴν αὐτοῦ οὐκ εἶδον· ἦν γὰρ περικεκαλυμμένος· τὸ δὲ σθένος αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ὀλκὴν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ ἔβλεπον. ἦν δὲ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἄλλυσις χρυσῇ ὡς λιτρῶν ρ'

of the *Alexander Romance* with precision, and the β is no exception. The β recension is derived from the α recension, and we presume that the α recension was the current form of the text when it was translated into Latin by Julius Valerius (not later than AD 340). So Julius Valerius provides us with a *terminus post quem* for the β recension. The β recension also seems to betray the influence of Palladius († ca. 430), which provides us with a further *terminus post quem*. The Armenian translation (ca. 500) is, on the whole, a rendering of a text of the α recension, but the translator also knew and used a representative of the β recension, and so the Armenian translation can be used as a *terminus ante quem*.

4 These are features of the β recension identified by Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, 247–71, in a masterful analysis with which, on the whole, I can only concur.

καὶ στέφανος χρυσοῦς κρεμάμενος διαυγής. ἀντὶ δὲ πυρὸς ἦν λίθος τίμιος φῶς ἐκφαίνων ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ ναῷ ἐκεῖνῳ. ἦν δὲ καὶ ὀρτυγοτροφεῖον χρυσοῦν κρεμάμενον ἐκ τῆς ὀροφῆς, ἐν ᾧ ἦν ὄρνειον ἡλίκον περιστέρα. καὶ ὥσπερ ἀνθρωπίνῃ φωνῇ Ἑλληνικῇ ἐβόησέ μοι καὶ φησιν· “Ἀλέξανδρε, παῦσαι λοιπὸν θεῷ ἀντιτασσόμενος, καὶ ὑπόστρεφε εἰς τὰ ἴδια μέλεθρα καὶ μὴ προπετεύου ἀναβαίνειν εἰς οὐρανίους ὁδούς.” Βουλομένου δέ μου καθελεῖν αὐτὸ καὶ τὴν κρεμαμένην κανδήλαν, ὅπως ἀποστείλω σοι, καὶ εἶδον τὸν ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης κινούμενον ὡς δοκεῖν αὐτὸν ἀναστῆναι. ἔφησαν δέ μοι οἱ φίλοι μου· “παῦσαι, βασιλεῦ· ἱερὸν γάρ ἐστιν.” ἔξελθὼν δὲ εἰς τὸν περίβολον εἶδον ἐκεῖ κειμένους κρατήρας χρυσοτορνεύτους δύο χωροῦντας ἀνά μετρητὰς ξ', οὓς καὶ ἐξεμετρήσαμεν ἐν τῷ δείπνῳ. ἐκέλευσα δὲ τὴν παρεμβολὴν ἐκεῖ γενέσθαι πᾶσαν καὶ εὐωχῆσθαι. ἦν δὲ ἐκεῖ οἶκος μέγας κατεσκευασμένος. ἦσαν δὲ ἐκεῖ ποτήρια ἐπίσημα πολλὰ πάσης εὐπρεπείας ἄξια ἐκ λίθων τετορνευμένα. ἐν δὲ τῷ κατακλιθῆναι ἡμᾶς τε καὶ τὰ στρατεύματα πρὸς εὐωχίαν ἐπὶ δείπνον ἐξαίφνης ὥσπερ βροντὴ βιαία αὐλῶν καὶ κυμβάλων πλήθους καὶ σύριγγος καὶ σάλπιγγος καὶ τυμπάνων καὶ κιθάρας ἐγένετο. καὶ τὸ ὄρος ὅλον ἐκαπνίζετο, ὥσπερ κεραυνοῦ πολλοῦ πεσόντος ἐφ' ἡμᾶς.

Ἡμεῖς οὖν φοβηθέντες ἀνεχωρήσαμεν ἐκ τοῦ τόπου ἐκείνου καὶ ἤλθομεν ἐπὶ τὰ Κύρου βασιλεία.⁵

And retiring from there [the City of the Sun] we came to the harbor of Lysos; and we found a very high mountain, which I climbed and saw beautiful houses full of gold and silver. I also saw a great circuit wall of sapphire stone having 150 steps, and above a round temple with 100 sapphire columns in a circle. Inside and outside

5 *Al. Rom.* (β) 3.28.5–10; ed. L. Bergson, *Der Griechische Alexanderroman, Rezension β* (Stockholm, 1965), 176–78; cf. H. van Thiel, *Leben und Taten Alexanders von Makedonien: Der griechische Alexanderroman nach der Handschrift L* (Darmstadt, 1974), 154–57. The contents of the manuscripts representing the different recensions can vary, but three of the four principal witnesses to the β recension, B (Parisinus Gr. 1685), K (Mosquensis 436 [298]), and V (Vaticanus graecus 1556), and L MS (Leiden Vulcanianus 93), a variant of the β recension, all contain the Lysos episode. The fourth principal witness, F (Laurentianus 70.37), ends at *Al. Rom.* 3.1 and so would not be expected to exhibit this interpolation. The translation above and all others in this paper are the author’s own.

were carved in low relief images of demigods: Bacchae, Satyrs, women mystics playing the flute and raving in ecstatic trances; and there was the old man Maron on his ass. In the middle of the sanctuary was set a couch spread with cloth of gold [?], on which was a man with a fine cotton cloth thrown about him. And I did not see his form, for he had been entirely covered; but I saw his strength and the weight of his body. In the middle of the temple there was a golden chain of about a hundred pounds and a radiant crown hanging from the gold. Instead of fire there was a precious stone that shone light on the whole of that sanctuary. And there was a golden bird-cage hanging from the ceiling, in which there was a bird as big as a dove. And it called to me as if in a human voice speaking Greek and said, "Alexander, henceforth stop setting yourself in opposition to god, and turn back to your own halls and do not rashly hasten to ascend to heavenly ways." I wanted to take down this [bird] and the hanging light, to send them to you, when I saw that the man on the couch moved so that he seemed to be rousing himself. My friends said to me, "Stop, O King, for it is sacred." Going out to the circuit wall I saw two large, gold-embossed mixing bowls containing up to 60 measures, which we measured out at dinner. I ordered the whole encampment to be made there and to feast. There was a great house built there. There were there many inscribed drinking cups equal to any in fine appearance, turned out of stones. As we and the army were reclining for the feast at dinner there suddenly arose as it were a mighty thundering of pipes and a multitude of cymbals, of fife and trumpet, of kettledrums and lyre. And the whole mountain was smoking, as if a great lightning bolt had fallen on us.

So we were afraid and withdrew from that place and came to the palace of Cyrus. . . .

The narrative appears in the first person because the context is a letter from Alexander to his mother, Olympias. Much of the story of the *Alexander Romance* is told in and through letters, either exchanges between Alexander and his opponents, especially Darius, or Alexander's reports back home to Olympias and his

tutor, Aristotle.⁶ It is in his letters to his mother that Alexander often recounts his adventures at the ends of the earth and beyond the known world, where he encounters strange marvels and undertakes fantastic exploits, such as his journey into the Land of Darkness and his flight into the air drawn by griffins.⁷ So on the one hand, Lysos is firmly situated in the realm of the fabulous, where the extraordinary might occur without straining credulity; its wonders, if impressive, are nevertheless par for the course. But Alexander's letters to Olympias are also occasions for reflection on such deep matters as mortality and the universality of human grief. In one of them, Alexander relates the birth of a hideously monstrous child at Babylon and its interpretation as a portent of his death.⁸ Likewise in a letter the dying Alexander bids his mother to hold a banquet, but invite only those who have known no sorrow; when no one comes, she has the solace of knowing that she is not alone in her sadness.⁹ So we should not be surprised, on the other hand, to find the content of a letter to Olympias trying to convey a profound and searching message on matters of the utmost gravity. The Lysos episode, like many of the stories told in the letters to Olympias, is neither exclusively a wonder tale, nor a bit of didacticism, but a combination of both.

Lysos and Nysa in India

Some scholars of no mean repute have taken Lysos to be a corruption of Nysa (the name appears only once in the passage and is subject to considerable variation in the manuscripts), and the whole episode to be a rendition of Alexander's visit to the city of Nysa in India, an incident that is recorded in the historical tradition.¹⁰

6 On the place of letters in the composition of the *Alexander Romance*, see P. Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions: The Letter in Greek Literature* (Cambridge, 2001), 169–92; T. Whitmarsh, "Addressing Power: Fictional Letters between Alexander and Darius," in *Epistolary Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature*, ed. O. Hodkinson, P. Rosenmeyer, and E. Bracke (Leiden, 2013), 169–86.

7 *Al. Rom.* (β) 2.23–41, 3.26–8.

8 *Al. Rom.* 3.30.

9 *Al. Rom.* (β) 3.33.1–4.

10 See R. Merkelbach, *Die Quellen des griechischen Alexanderromans*, 2nd ed., with J. Trumpf (Munich, 1977), 148; Bergson, *Alexanderroman, Rezension β*, notes to pp. 176–77. Dowden notes an emendation of the manuscript and renders the place name "Nysa" in his translation of the L MS of the β recension; K. Dowden in

Arrian, who gives perhaps the fullest account,¹¹ says that when Alexander arrived at Nysa, an ancient foundation of Dionysus, a delegation of citizens came out to meet him, and besought him “to leave the city to the god” (ἀφείναι τῷ θεῷ τὴν πόλιν) and to preserve their freedom and autonomy “out of reverence for Dionysus” (αἰδοῖ τοῦ Διονύσου).¹² Alexander granted their request and visited the nearby Mount Meros, supposedly named by Dionysus for his incubation in Zeus’s thigh (μηρός), with a picked body of troops. Here he was delighted to discover ivy, which grew nowhere else in India, made sacrifices to Dionysus, and feasted with his companions (εὐωχηθῆναι ὁμοῦ τοῖς ἐταίροις), some of whom were reportedly possessed by the god and entered a Bacchic frenzy.¹³ Particularly noteworthy in Arrian’s account are the indications of a concern with respect for the god of the place and the specific word he uses for Alexander’s feasting with his companions, both of which seem to be recalled in the *Romance*’s Lysos episode.

Curtius offers a version of the same incident with a few variants.¹⁴ He says that Alexander attacked Nysa and, because his army was camped before the city on an especially cold night, accidentally burned the wooden sepulchers of the city’s dead, but the Nysaeans eventually capitulated.¹⁵ Here Nysa is still a city founded by Dionysus below Mount Meron, and Alexander goes to the summit of the mountain with his whole army, where they find ivy and they feast and worship Father Liber for ten days.¹⁶ The burning of the graves in Curtius’s version, even though it is accidental and

not directed against the god, may suggest some impiety on the part of Alexander, a reckless disregard for the sacred against which, in the *Romance*, both a marvelous talking bird and his friends warn him at the Lysos temple. On the whole, however, Curtius agrees with Arrian, and between the two of them they exhibit most of the details found in all of the other accounts of this incident.¹⁷

It is tempting to identify Lysos with Nysa, and read the episode in the *Romance* as a garbled, exaggerated, and fabulous version of a historical event. The topography is generally consistent, particularly as it is described by Curtius, who says that Nysa was situated at the foot of the mountain (*sita est urbs sub radicibus montis*): Lysos too lies below a great mountain, and in both sources the mountain is topped by a sanctuary of Dionysus.¹⁸ The unnamed god of the *Romance* is explicitly identified by the historians as Dionysus. As in Curtius, the Alexander of the *Romance* proceeds to the mountaintop with his whole army (*cum toto exercitu*) and there are preparations for a feast (*praemissis commeatibus*).¹⁹ Even the Lysos episode’s crucial aspect, the manifestation of a divine presence, is provided by the historians inasmuch as some of Alexander’s troops are said to have been overcome by Bacchic frenzy and raved on Mount Meros, although this part of the story is reported with varying degrees of skepticism and incredulity, the historians generally suspecting some imposture to please the king.²⁰ But the records of the historians do not explain everything in the Lysos episode, let alone the important differences between the accounts of Alexander at Nysa and the narrative of his visit to Lysos.

And these differences are numerous and substantial. There is no indication, in the first place, that Nysa is a harbor or anywhere near the sea, whereas this is practically all we know about Lysos: that it is a port

B. Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley, 2008), 729 and n. 93. The manuscripts attest Λύσου, Λύσσου, ὁ λύμπου, and Νύσου; Bergson, *Alexanderroman, Rezension β*, apparatus, p. 176. Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, 263–64, takes the Lysos episode as a reintroduction of the account of the events at Nysa, found in the historians, into the narrative of the *Romance* and part of the tendency of the β recension toward greater historical accuracy.

11 Arr., *Anab.* 5.1–2. For an incisive discussion, see R. Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great* (London, 1997), 335–38. See also K. Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature* (Helsinki, 1989), 56, 59, 207 n. 97, 214; O. Amitay, *From Alexander to Jesus* (Berkeley, 2010), 40–43.

12 Arr., *Anab.* 5.1.3, 5.

13 Arr., *Anab.* 5.1.6, 2.5–7; see W. Otto, *Dionysus: Myth and Cult*, trans. R. Palmer (Bloomington, 1965), 153, 155–56.

14 Curt., 8.10.7–18.

15 Curt., 8.10.7–10.

16 Curt., 8.10.11–18.

17 Plut., *Alex.* 58.4–5; Just., *Epit.* 12.7.6–8; *Epitoma Rerum Gestarum Alexandri et Liber de Morte Eius* (*Epit. Mett.*) 36–38; cf. Polyæn., 1.1.2. See J. Hamilton, *Plutarch, Alexander: A Commentary* (Oxford, 1969), 160–61; J. Yardley and W. Heckel, *Justin, Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, vol. 1, *Books 11–12: Alexander the Great* (Oxford, 1997), 238–40.

18 Arr., *Anab.* 5.1.6; Curt., 8.10.12; *Epit. Mett.* 36; cf. Strabo, 15.1.7–8.

19 Arr., *Anab.* 5.2.5–6; Curt., 8.10.13; Just., *Epit.* 12.7.7; *Epit. Mett.* 38.

20 Arr., *Anab.* 5.2.7–3.4; Curt., 8.10.15–18; Just., *Epit.* 12.7.8.

city with a harbor (Λύσου λιμένα).²¹ There are a number of signs that the temple on the mountain above Lysos belongs to Dionysus, but ivy, the telltale calling card of the god, is not among them. Alexander and his men, however, find ivy on Mount Meros in all of the fuller versions of the visit to Nysa, and its presence proves the city's connection to Dionysus.²² If this is supposed to be the *Romance's* version of Alexander's visit to Nysa, the absence of ivy from the Lysos temple is distinctly odd. The historians, moreover, offer no suggestion that there is a temple structure of any kind on Mount Meros, sacred though it is to Dionysus; rather the summit is supposed to be remarkable for shady groves, healthy fruits, rich soil, and abundant hunting grounds.²³ This is in marked contrast to the *Romance's* elaborate and impressive sapphire temple complex. The most striking differences between Nysa and Lysos, however, occur in the encounters Alexander experiences and what happens in the incidents at each place. At Nysa, Alexander met the envoys of a populous citizen body (the Metz Epitome notes that the city had fifty thousand inhabitants) and engaged in a lively conversation on civic government with their chief, Acuphis.²⁴ At Lysos, by contrast, to all appearances Alexander comes upon nothing but an eerily empty temple, devoid of any human presence save for a man under a sheet, and the voice of a talking bird; the effect is decidedly unsettling. On Mount Meros the army holds the feast planned by the king and without a care in the world they abandon

themselves to the revels of Dionysus, "as if it were peacetime" (*velut in media pace*), as Curtius puts it, and they were not surrounded by enemies.²⁵ At the mountain-top temple above Lysos, however, the intended feast is never held; as the men settle down to dine, the festivities are interrupted by uncanny noises and the smoking mountain, and they withdraw in terror. The accounts of Alexander's visit to Nysa may have informed the passage in the *Romance* about the Lysos temple—there are several indications that it did—but this interpolation is telling a fundamentally different story from that in the historians.

Perhaps the best hint as to the nature of this story is to be found in the distinctive features of the Lysos episode, beginning with the form and substance of the Lysos temple. Temples situated on mountain heights were not at all uncommon in the Graeco-Roman world, nor were peristyle temples surrounded by columns, but the same cannot be said of round temples, and certainly not of temples made of sapphire. The Lysos temple's round form and the sapphire material from which it is made offer the first clues as to the passage's intent and underlying message.

Round Temples, Round Tombs

Greek architecture offers no famous or early example of a circular building that can be positively identified as a temple, and so no obvious counterpart to the round temple (ἱερόν στρογγύλον) at Lysos, but a number of prominent structures, some associated with famous sanctuaries, were circular in form.²⁶ One of the earliest of these was a round structure built at Delphi in the sixth century BC; its precise site cannot be located.²⁷ The dining room of the Prytanes in the Athenian Agora, built around 470 BC, was called the *Tholos*, a name that

21 Dowden in Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 729, offers the translation "the meadow of Nysa," apparently following Zacher's proposal, noted by Bergson, *Alexanderroman, Rezension* β, 176, that λιμένα be emended to λειμώννα; J. Zacher, *Pseudocallisthenes: Forschungen zur Kritik und Geschichte der ältesten Aufzeichnung* (Halle, 1867), 169–70. Two passages from Arrian's *Anabasis* might be offered in support of the emendation from "port" to "meadow." In one (6.29.4), Alexander finds Cyrus's tomb "in the meadow" (ἐν τῷ λειμῶνι) created by the plantings and irrigation of the royal park at Pasargadae, and, as we shall see, the temple at Lysos is something of a tomb. In the other (7.1.5), Alexander encounters the Indian sages "in a meadow" (ἐν λειμῶνι), where they offer him a deflating message that casts the pall of mortality over his conquests; Alexander's confidence is likewise undermined by alien wisdom at Lysos. The emendation does not, however, really clarify the identification, since none of the accounts of Nysa mention a meadow.

22 Arr., *Anab.* 5.1.6, 2.5–6; Curt., 8.10.13; Just., *Epit.* 12.7.7; cf. Diod. Sic., 1.19.7.

23 Arr., *Anab.* 5.2.5; Curt., 8.10.13–14; *Epit. Mett.* 38.

24 Arr., *Anab.* 5.1.3–2.4; Curt., 8.10.9–10; Just., *Epit.* 12.7.6; *Epit. Mett.* 36–8.

25 Arr., *Anab.* 5.2.6; Curt., 8.10.17; Just., *Epit.* 12.7.8.

26 F. Robert, *Thymélé: Recherches sur la signification et la destination des monuments circulaires dans l'architecture religieuse de la Grèce* (Paris, 1939); A. Lawrence, *Greek Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 1957), 183–89; G. Roux, "Trésors, Temples, Tholos," *Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient* 7 (1984): 166–71; F. Seiler, *Die griechische Tholos: Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung, Typologie und Funktion kunstmäßiger Rundbauten* (Mainz am Rhein, 1986).

27 Seiler, *Die griechische Tholos*, 40–55; M. Scott, *Delphi: A History of the Center of the Ancient World* (Princeton, 2014), 82, 105.

implies a round plan and a conical roof.²⁸ The Athenian Tholos was not a temple, but a public dining hall; its purpose, however, recalls the concern with feasting in the Lysos episode and Alexander's intention to dine with his army in the temple grounds. Theodorus of Phocaea has been identified as the architect of a marble *tholos* constructed at Delphi in the early fourth century BC, which was later converted into a temple of Roma and Augustus.²⁹ The original purpose of this structure is unclear, but it was situated at one of the best-known and most frequented holy places in Greece and so would have garnered considerable notoriety. The reputation for the finest example of a building on the tholos plan, however, was held by the *Thymele* or "Place of Sacrifice," designed by the younger Polycleitus at Epidauros and completed around 360 BC.³⁰ Like Theodorus's Tholos at Delphi, the Thymele at Epidauros was located at an especially famous and popular panhellenic shrine and would itself have been quite well known. Both of these structures had rings of columns on the outside and the inside of their walls, which might be recalled by the description of the temple in the *Alexander Romance*. The Arsinoeum at Samothrace of shortly before 270, a sanctuary where sacrificial rituals were carried out, was also built on the tholos plan; indeed, while it stood the Arsinoeum was the largest round building in the Greek world.³¹ The circular colonnaded temple of Athena at Knidos probably also dates from the second century BC; a large statue base indicates that it was indeed a temple,

although the deity to whom it was dedicated was previously identified as Aphrodite.³² Round temples continued to be built in the Greek world in the imperial age, perhaps most impressively the temple of Asklepios Soter (previously identified as the temple of Zeus-Asklepios), on the pattern of the Roman Pantheon, at Pergamum in about 145.³³ A nymphaeum, or shrine of the nymphs (identified by the well within it), at Argos of the second century AD was also constructed as a tholos.³⁴

At least two round buildings of a sacred character were explicitly associated with Alexander and his family. The Philippeum was built at Olympia in 335 BC in order to house the images of the Macedonian royal family, including Alexander.³⁵ Like the Tholos at Delphi and the Thymele at Epidauros, the Philippeum was located at one of the principal sanctuaries of the Greek world and so would have enjoyed considerable fame. Not a trace survives of the Tychaion, or shrine of Fortune, at Alexandria, but we do have an elaborate description of the building in an ekphrasis attributed to Libanius of Antioch.³⁶ The Tychaion was apparently circular (there was a round *tychaion*, of the second or

28 [Arist.,] *Ath. Pol.* 43.3, 44.1; Paus., 1.5.1. See J. Frazer, *Pausanias's Description of Greece* (London, 1898), 2:76–77; Seiler, *Die griechische Tholos*, 29–35.

29 Vittr., *De arch.* 7.1.12. See Seiler, *Die griechische Tholos*, 56–71; Scott, *Delphi*, 149, 220, 278, 292.

30 Paus., 2.27.3. See Frazer, *Pausanias*, 3:245–48; Robert, *Thymélé*, 259–364; A. Burford, *The Greek Temple Builders at Epidauros: A Social and Economic Study of Building in the Asklepien Sanctuary, During the Fourth and Early Third Centuries B.C.* (Liverpool, 1969) 63–68; Seiler, *Die griechische Tholos*, 72–89.

31 K. Lehmann, *Samothrace: A Guide to the Excavations and the Museum*, 4th ed. (Locust Valley, NY, 1975), 54–58; Seiler, *Die griechische Tholos*, 107–15; J. McCredie, G. Roux, S. Shaw, and J. Kurtich, *Samothrace*, vol. 7, *The Rotunda of Arsinoe*, Bollingen Series 60, no. 7 (Princeton, 1992); W. Burkert, "Concordia Discors: The Literary and the Archaeological Evidence on the Sanctuary of Samothrace," in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*, ed. N. Marinatos and R. Hägg (London, 1993), 185. On the interpretation of the Arsinoeum as a *thymele*, or place of sacrifice, see K. Lehmann, "Samothrace: Third Preliminary Report," *Hesperia* 19 (1950): 13; idem, "Samothrace: Fourth Preliminary Report," *Hesperia* 20 (1951): 10.

32 H. Bankel, "Knidos: Der hellenistische Rundtempel und sein Altar; Vorbericht," *AA* (1997): 51–71.

33 O. Deubner, *Das Asklepieion von Pergamon: Kurze vorläufige Beschreibung* (Berlin, 1938), 52–56; A. Boëthius and J. Ward-Perkins, *Etruscan and Roman Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 1970), 388–89, 393–95.

34 Lawrence, *Greek Architecture*, 188; Boëthius and Ward-Perkins, *Etruscan and Roman Architecture*, 385.

35 Paus., 5.17.4, 20.9–10. See Frazer, *Pausanias*, 3:600, 622–23; L. Drees, *Olympia: Gods, Artists, and Athletes*, trans. G. Onn (New York, 1968), 121–23; S. Miller, "The Philippeion and Macedonian Hellenistic Architecture," *MDAI* 88 (1973): 189–218; A. Borbein, "Die griechische Statue des 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.: Formanalytische Untersuchungen zur Kunst der Nachklassik," *JDAI* 88 (1973): 66–67; Seiler, *Die griechische Tholos*, 89–103; E. Carney, "The Philippeum, Women, and the Formation of Dynastic Image," in *Alexander's Empire: Formulation to Decay*, ed. W. Heckel, L. Tritle, and P. Wheatley (Claremont, CA, 2007), 27–60; O. Palagaia, "Philip's Eurydice in the Philippeum at Olympia," in *Philip II and Alexander the Great: Father and Son, Lives and Afterlives*, ed. E. Carney and D. Ogden (Oxford, 2010), 33–41.

36 Libanius (pseudo-Nicolaus), *Progymnasmata* 12 (*Descriptions*).25.2–8; ed. R. Foerster, *Libanii Opera* (Leipzig, 1903–27), 8:529–31. See P. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford, 1972), 1:242, 2:392–93; C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, 1997), 143; C. Gibson, "Alexander in the Tychaion: Ps.-Libanius on the Statues," *GRBS* 47 (2007): 431–54; E. La Rocca, "Agrippa's Pantheon and Its Origin," in *The Pantheon: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. T. Marder and M. Wilson Jones

third century AD, at Side in Pamphylia³⁷) with statues of twelve gods in niches in its wall and in its center a statuary group of Tyche, surrounded by Victories, crowning Gaia, who in turn crowned Alexander. The Tychaion also seems to have contained other statues of Alexander in different poses. The Tychaion was still a well-known part of the Alexandrian landscape when the β recension was composed; the structure survived until the seventh century and its transformation into a wine bar was the subject of a number of epigrams by Palladas in the late fourth century.³⁸ Since neither the Philippeum nor the Tychaion was a temple of Dionysus, nor on a mountaintop, nor surrounded by sapphire columns, neither of these buildings can altogether have been a model for the Lysos temple, but the clear association of each with Alexander himself might possibly have suggested the form taken by a temple Alexander is said to have visited in a later fiction.

Intriguingly, one of the more prominent buildings at the Parthian capital of Nisa or Nisaia (modern Baghir, Turkmenistan) was a round structure, or more precisely a square building dominated by a large circular inner room, which has been identified as both a temple and a meeting hall and appears to have been decorated in the Greek style with statues in niches in an upper section of the interior.³⁹ There are inviting correspondences between this building and that in the Lysos episode. The name of the Parthian capital, especially the form of Nisa (although the forms Nisaea, Nesaia, and Nigaea are also attested), is remarkably close to that of the Indian city of Nysa, which was the scene of an incident in the career of Alexander that, as we have seen, has been taken to be the inspiration of

the *Romance's* Lysos episode.⁴⁰ The location of Nisa on the very edge of the *oikoumene* or outside of it (Nisa was on the periphery of Alexander's realm and, very briefly, that of his Seleucid successors, and never a part of the Roman Empire) is consistent with Lysos being situated on Alexander's journey "into the interior" or "upcountry" (ἡ ἄνω πορεία), the unfamiliar country where Alexander's marvelous adventures take place.⁴¹ Although not on a mountaintop like the temple at Lysos, Nisa is situated on something of an eminence that stands above the surrounding plain. Isidore says that Nisa, or Parthaunisa, was the site of royal graves (ἐνθα βασιλικάι ταφαί), although these graves have yet to be discovered in the remains of Old Nisa, and the Lysos temple, as we shall see, might also be seen as something of a sepulcher, because of its form and the presence of the shrouded man within it.⁴² This last correlation would seem to be particularly strong if Antonio Invernizzi is correct in his proposal that the Round Room at Nisa was the mausoleum of Mithridates I, the founder of the Parthian Empire.⁴³ But we have no corroborative evidence that the round structure, or any of the monuments of Nisa for that matter, caught

(Cambridge, 2015), 73–75. The *Alexander Romance* (1.31.5) also uses this same building as a landmark.

37 Boëthius and Ward-Perkins, *Etruscan and Roman Architecture*, 408.

38 *Anth. Pal.* 9.180–83. See C. Bowra, "Palladas on Tyche," *CQ* n.s. 10 (1960): 122–25; Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 167, 212.

39 N. Krashennikova and G. Pugachenkova, "Kruglyj hram parfjanskij Nisy [Temple rond de Nissa parthienne]," *SovArkh* 4 (1964): 119–35; V. Masson, *Old Nisa—a Parthian Royal Residence* (Leningrad, n.d.), 4; A. Invernizzi and C. Lippolis, eds., *Nisa Partica: Ricerche nel complesso monumentale Arsacide, 1990–2006* (Florence, 2008), 7–81. On Nisa in general, see G. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in the East from Armenia and Mesopotamia to Bactria and India* (Berkeley, 2013), 220–21.

40 Isidore of Charax (*Mansiones Parthicae*, 12) says that the city of Parthaunisa (Παρθαύνισα) was called Nisaia (Νισαία) by the Greeks. Otherwise, Strabo, 11.7.2: Νησαία; Ptol., *Geog.* 6.10.4, 8.23.6: Νίσαια ἢ Νίγαια; Amm. Marc., 23.6.54: *Nigaea*.

41 The ruins of Nisa are in the hills east of the Caspian Sea, near modern Ashkhabad. W. Schoff, *Parthian Stations by Isidore of Charax: An Account of the Overland Trade Route between the Levant and India in the First Century B.C.* (Philadelphia, 1914), 31, simply identifies Parthaunisa or Nisaea with the modern Naishapur. Strabo (11.7.2) sets Nisa in Hyrcania, Isidore (*Mansiones Parthicae* 12) in a region he calls Parthyene, Ptolemy (*Geog.* 6.10.4, 8.23.6) in Margiane, and Ammianus Marcellinus (23.6.54) in Margiana. All of these regions would have signified the ends of the earth to the ancient reader. Strabo (11.7.2) notes the brief tenure of the Macedonians over Hyrcania, but also that they were so preoccupied by wars that they were not able to look after their remote possessions (τὰ πόρρω). The phrase περὶ τῆς ἄνω πορείας occurs in the α recension of the *Romance* (3.27.2), but in the β recension a departure from the known world is clearly intended, even if it is not explicitly indicated as in the α recension.

42 Isidore of Charax, *Mansiones Parthicae* 12 = FGrHist 781 F 2. For a recent reappraisal of the nature and intention of Isidore's work, see N. Kramer, "Das Itinerar Σταθμοὶ Παρθικοὶ des Isidor von Charax—Beschreibung eines Handelsweges?," *Klio* 85 (2003): 120–30.

43 A. Invernizzi, "Arsacid Dynastic Art," *Parthica* 3 (2001): 133–57; A. Invernizzi, "The Culture of Parthian Nisa between Steppe and Empire," in *After Alexander: Central Asia before Islam*, ed. J. Cribb and G. Herrmann, *ProcBrAc* 133 (Oxford, 2007), 163–77.

the attention of the Greco-Roman world, and we cannot suggest how it may have come to contribute to the image of the Lysos temple.

The possible sources of inspiration for the Lysos temple might also be found even further to the east. The round temple in the *Romance* is similar in form to a Buddhist stupa. Inasmuch as stupas housed the relics of the heroes of the Buddhist faith, the Lysos temple with its recumbent occupant might also seem to serve the same purpose. The decoration of the temple at Lysos, moreover, might be considered a reminiscence of artwork actually to be found in what is now Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. There are plenty of examples of Dionysiac art from the site of Taxila, and even some scenes that were assumed in antiquity to depict Alexander, and so connect the legacy of the site to the hero of the *Romance*. Philostratus, in his *Life of Apollonius*, describes bronze panels in a temple at Taxila that illustrated the encounter of Alexander and Porus, and it has been suggested that these may have been based on some actual Buddhist reliefs depicting Mara's assault on the Buddha.⁴⁴ Several instances of figures and scenes in Kushan art might be taken to portray Dionysus and his followers or typically Dionysiac drinking scenes, although they have their own indigenous meaning and precedents.⁴⁵ These motifs might be claimed as the reality behind the Satyrs and Bacchants said to be carved on the walls of the Lysos temple. Once again, however, it is very difficult to say how any definite knowledge of either Buddhist stupas or the elements of Kushan art might have been conveyed to the Mediterranean world. Nor is it really necessary to find material models in the right locale for an entirely fictitious structure; far better to identify the sort of building being alluded to so as to understand the nature of the imaginary temple.

44 Philostr., *VA* 2.20.2–3. See S. Dar, *Taxila and the Western World*, 2nd ed. (Lahore, 1998), 90, cf. 40–41, 68, 131–32, 135–36, 138–39, 143, 146, 149, 152–55, 158, 160–61, 164, 170 n. 138, 173, 233, 248, 256, 267 n. 115.

45 M. Carter, "Dionysiac Aspects of Kushān Art," *Ars Orientalis* 7 (1968): 121–46; M. Carter, "The Bacchants of Mathura: New Evidence of Dionysiac Yaksha Imagery from Kushan Mathura," *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 69 (1982): 247–57; M. Carter, "Dionysiac Festivals and Gandhāran Imagery," in *Banquets d'Orient* (Res Orientales IV), ed. R. Gyselen and M. Bernus-Taylor (Bures-sur-Yvette, 1992), 51–60; M. Carter, *Arts of the Hellenized East: Precious Metalwork and Gems of the Pre-Islamic Era* (London, 2015), 355–76.

The form of the round temple appears to have been more common in Roman than in Greek architecture. Vitruvius devotes a chapter of his *De architectura* to the design of temples on such a plan (*aedes rutundae*).⁴⁶ A number of prominent examples were to be found in the city of Rome itself. The surviving round temple near the Tiber, just off the Forum Romanum, near the Regia and the House of the Vestals, has traditionally been identified as the Temple of Vesta, rebuilt after a fire in 14 BC and restored under Nero, Trajan, and Septimius Severus; and other supposed temples of Vesta were round, including the famous one at Tivoli.⁴⁷ The circular temple has also been identified as the Temple of Hercules Victor in *Foro Boario*, from the late second century BC.⁴⁸ This temple of Hercules had a reputation well beyond the time of its foundation and was mentioned in such late antique works as Servius's commentary on the *Aeneid* and the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius.⁴⁹ There was also the first-century BC round temple dedicated to Fortuna Huiusce Diei in the Campus Martius.⁵⁰ The most famous round temple in Rome, however, was probably the Pantheon as it was rebuilt by Hadrian between AD 118 and 128.⁵¹ The Round Temple at Ostia was built between 230 and 240, apparently on the model of the Pantheon.⁵² These Roman examples demonstrate that round buildings could serve as temples (which is not clear from many of their Greek equivalents). There may be some question as to just how the monuments of the city entered the imagination of the Greek-speaking East, where the various recensions of the *Romance* were written, but even in the earliest

46 Vitruv., *De arch.* 4.8.1–3.

47 A. Boëthius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture* (New Haven, 1978), 138–39, 158–59; J. Stamper, *The Architecture of Roman Temples: The Republic to the Middle Empire* (Cambridge, 2005), 75–79.

48 A. Ziolkowski, "Mummius' Temple of Hercules Victor and the Round Temple on the Tiber," *Phoenix* 42 (1988): 309–33; Stamper, *Architecture of Roman Temples*, 68–75.

49 Serv., *ad Aen.* 8.362–63; Macrobi., *Sat.* 3.6.10.

50 P. Jacobs and D. Conlin, *Campus Martius: The Field of Mars in the Life of Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, 2014), 53–54.

51 W. MacDonald, *The Pantheon: Design, Meaning, and Progeny* (Cambridge, 1976), esp. 44–49, 98–108; Stamper, *Architecture of Roman Temples*, 187–205; Jacobs and Conlin, *Campus Martius*, 153–57; Marder and Wilson Jones, *Pantheon*.

52 C. Briggs, "The 'Pantheon' of Ostia (and Its Immediate Surroundings)," *MAAR* 8 (1930): 161–69; Boëthius and Ward-Perkins, *Etruscan and Roman Architecture*, 286.

form we know the *Romance* is clearly the product of a world of which Rome is very much an integral part, and this is certainly true of the later β recension.⁵³ It should come as no surprise, then, if some of the models of the imaginary structures of the *Romance* were to be found in the actual buildings of Rome.

The building Alexander finds on the mountain-top at Lysos is explicitly said to be a temple (ἱερόν), but the circular form in architecture was perhaps more commonly associated with the structure of tombs or mausoleums. The stupendous tomb of the Lydian king Alyattes near Sardis, which stood comparison with the monuments of Egypt and Babylon for its grandeur, was measured according to its circumference (ἡ περίοδος τοῦ σήματος), and while it can still be seen today, it is probably more important for its reputation that it was enshrined in Greek literature by Herodotus.⁵⁴ The so-called Tomb of Tantalus outside of Smyrna was probably, like the tomb of Alyattes, constructed in the sixth century BC.⁵⁵ Prominent examples of round tombs can, once again, be found in the city of Rome.⁵⁶ The Mausoleum of Augustus, completed in 28 BC, was a massive burial mound of earth and circular stone retaining walls that loomed over the northern approaches to the city along both the Via Flaminia and the Tiber and housed the remains of several members of Augustus's family.⁵⁷ The Mausoleum of Hadrian, now the Castel Sant'Angelo, was built between AD 134 and 139, as a stone cylinder with a garden and an image of the emperor in a chariot at its summit; it received the remains of Hadrian in 138 and of several succeeding

emperors.⁵⁸ Hadrian's Tomb still stood in the sixth century, very much as it was first constructed, to impress Procopius and to be used as a fortress in the wars he chronicled.⁵⁹ But the form of the round tomb was widespread. In North Africa, for example, the so-called Medracen and Tombeau de la Chrétienne are enormous tombs having the form of burial mounds, but built entirely of stone; they were once thought to have been constructed as tombs for the kings of Numidia and Mauretania in the first century BC, but the more recent scholarship of Coarelli and Thébert dates them respectively to the turn of the second century and the end of the second century or first half of the first century BC.⁶⁰ The scholarship of Coarelli and Thébert also suggests that these monumental tombs found their model in the tomb of Alexander the Great himself at Alexandria, but we really have no evidence for the form of Alexander's mausoleum.⁶¹

Impressive examples of round tombs were also constructed in late antiquity, and so closer in time to the composition of the β recension.⁶² The Mausoleum of Diocletian (r. 284–305), octagonal on the exterior and circular and domed on the interior, with impressive columns inside and outside, was the centerpiece of his retirement palace at Split and seems to have inspired imitation among his colleagues and successors, who built altogether round tombs.⁶³ The Rotunda of St. George in Thessalonica was modified at some time in the fifth century for use as a church, especially by the addition of an apse, but seems to have originally been

53 See B. Garstad, "Rome in the *Alexander Romance*," *HSCPh* 108 (2015): 467–507.

54 Hdt., 1.93.2–5. See Lawrence, *Greek Architecture*, 183.

55 Lawrence, *Greek Architecture*, 183.

56 H. von Hesberg, *Römische Grabbauten* (Darmstadt, 1992), 94–113.

57 Strabo, 5.3.8. See P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. A. Shapiro (Ann Arbor, 1988), 72–77; J. Reeder, "Typology and Ideology in the Mausoleum of Augustus: Tumulus and Tholos," *Classical Antiquity* 11 (1992): 265–307; H. von Hesberg and S. Panciera, *Das Mausoleum des Augustus: Der Bau und seine Inschriften* (Munich, 1994); P. Davies, *Death and the Emperor: Roman Imperial Funerary Monuments from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius* (Cambridge, 2000), 13–19, 49–67, 137–42; P. Rehak, *Imperium and Cosmos: Augustus and the Northern Campus Martius*, ed. J. Younger (Madison, 2006), 35–58; Jacobs and Conlin, *Campus Martius*, 139–40.

58 Davies, *Death and the Emperor*, 34–40, 79–86, 158–63.

59 Procop., *Bell.* 5.22.13, 14, 19, 22, 7.36.17–23, 8.33.14.

60 M. Christofle, *Le Tombeau de la Chrétienne* (Paris, 1951); G. Camps, "Nouvelles observations sur l'architecture et l'âge du Medracen, mausolée royal de Numidie," *CRAI* 117 (1973): 470–517; F. Coarelli and Y. Thébert, "Architecture funéraire et pouvoir: Réflexions sur l'hellénisme numide," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome, Antiquité* 100 (1988): 761–818.

61 Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 1:15–17, 3:31–42; Reeder, "Typology and Ideology," 275–77.

62 See von Hesberg, *Römische Grabbauten*, 189–201; G. Mackie, *Early Christian Chapels in the West: Decoration, Function, and Patronage* (Toronto, 2003), 53–60, 144–94; M. Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2009).

63 J. Wilkes, *Diocletian's Palace, Split: Residence of a Retired Roman Emperor* (Sheffield, 1993), 46–52; Johnson, *Roman Imperial Mausoleum*, 59–70.

built as a tomb for the Tetrach Galerius (r. 293–311).⁶⁴ The Rotunda in Thessalonica seems to have had a western parallel in the Mausoleum of Maxentius (r. 306–312), a domed rotunda with columned and pedimented porch and surrounding portico, where his young son Valerius Romulus was buried, on the Via Appia outside of Rome.⁶⁵

The Rotunda, or Tomb of Galerius, as well as the other late antique examples are perhaps particularly apposite *comparanda* for the temple at Lysos, since unlike the earlier burial mounds, which contained solid masses of earth behind circular retaining walls and perhaps some internal passageways and crypts, they were hollow structures with articulated interiors that could be entered and surveyed, more like the tholoi. This is certainly true of the rotunda that was built between 315 and 327 as an annex to the basilica of Marcellinus and Petrus in Rome and served as a mausoleum for Helena, the mother of Constantine.⁶⁶ The temple at Lysos seems to be reminiscent of the Mausoleum of Helena not only in its round form, but also in its furnishings, since the *Liber Pontificalis* records that among Constantine's gifts to his mother's tomb was "a golden crown, which is a chandelier, with 120 dolphins, weighing 30 pounds" (*coronam auream quae est farus cantharus cum delfinos CXX, pens. lib. XXX*), just as there was a golden crown hanging from a chain and associated with the lighting of the room at Lysos.⁶⁷ Presumably, such chandeliers were regularly found in late antique rotunda-type tombs, although this is our only evidence for them.

One of the best preserved of the fourth-century imperial tombs is the rotunda that was built around AD 350 as a mausoleum for Constantina, the daughter of Constantine, and is now the Church of Santa Costanza in Rome.⁶⁸ In addition to its round form, this building is also marked by a ring of paired columns on the inside supporting the drum on which the dome sits, which in the building's original construction was complemented by a ring of columns around an ambulatory on the outside of the structure (the outer peristyle does not survive); these might recall the columns that are an important part of the Lysos temple. The mausoleum of Constantina was also decorated with mosaics depicting grapevines and scenes of the vintage, which may have led to some association with Dionysus, the wine god.⁶⁹

The monumental rotunda mausoleum was not necessarily the preserve of the imperial family, as is shown by the so-called Tomb of the Gordians, or Tor de' Schiavi, by the Via Prenestina, of the early fourth century (sometime after 309).⁷⁰ The circular mausoleum of the Ostrogothic king Theodoric at Ravenna, built around the time of his death in AD 526, shows that the form retained its currency.⁷¹ From the monumental tomb the rotunda plan was taken over as one of the standard forms of the Christian *martyria*, or churches built at a place associated with some Gospel event or to house the relics of the saints.⁷²

64 Boëthius and Ward-Perkins, *Etruscan and Roman Architecture*, 522–24; M. Vickers, "Thessalonike," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites*, ed. R. Stillwell (Princeton, 1976), 912–13. Johnson, *Roman Imperial Mausoleum*, rejects the identification of the Rotunda in Thessalonica as the tomb of Galerius, but assiduously notes (230 n. 49) the many scholars who have made this identification.

65 J. Rasch, "Metrologie und Planung des Maxentius-Mausoleums," in *Bauplanung und Bautheorie der Antike*, Diskussionen zur archäologischen Bauforschung 4 (Berlin, 1984), 250–62; J. Rasch, *Das Maxentius-Mausoleum an der Via Appia in Rom* (Mainz am Rhein, 1984); Johnson, *Roman Imperial Mausoleum*, 86–93.

66 G. Armstrong, "Constantine's Churches: Symbol and Structure," *JSAH* 33 (1974): 10; Johnson, *Roman Imperial Mausoleum*, 110–18.

67 *Lib. pontif.*, 34 (Silvester).26 (44); ed. L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1955–57), 1:182. See J. Guyon, *Le Cimetière aux Deux Lauriers: Recherches sur les catacombes romaines* (Rome, 1987), 240–42; Johnson, *Roman Imperial Mausoleum*, 116.

68 Armstrong, "Constantine's Churches," 10; J. Rasch and A. Arbeiter, *Das Mausoleum der Constantina in Rom* (Mainz am Rhein, 2007); Johnson, *Roman Imperial Mausoleum*, 139–56.

69 Rasch and Arbeiter, *Das Mausoleum der Constantina*, 204–21.

70 J. Rasch, *Das Mausoleum bei Tor de' Schiavi in Rom (Spätantike Zentralbauten in Rom und Latium, 2)* (Mainz am Rhein, 1993); Johnson, *Roman Imperial Mausoleum*, 93–103.

71 See M. Johnson, "Toward a History of Theodoric's Building Program," *DOP* 42 (1988): 92–95; D. Deliannis, "The Mausoleum of Theodoric and the Seven Wonders of the World," *JLA* 3 (2010): 365–85; idem, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2010), 124–36.

72 A. Grabar, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique* (Paris, 1946), 1:141–52; J. Ward-Perkins, "Memoria, Martyr's Tomb and Martyr's Church," *JTS*, n.s. 17 (1966): 29–30; Armstrong, "Constantine's Churches," 13–16; R. Ousterhout, "The Temple, the Sepulchre, and the Martyrion of the Savior," *Gesta* 29 (1990): 50–51. The remains of a round church dated to ca. 450–550 have been found at Pelusium in Egypt; although this form is extremely rare in Egypt, the building seems to have affinities with other round monumental and ecclesiastical buildings throughout the Mediterranean region and especially Palestine (Pelusium was the last city in Egypt before setting out for Palestine); J. McKenzie,

In the Christian world of the β recension, however, the most important and most famous round shrine was undoubtedly the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, or more specifically that part of it known as the Anastasis Rotunda. The Anastasis (or Resurrection) Rotunda was apparently a circular or semicircular structure (although its exterior was largely rectilinear) with an inner ring of columns and piers, set in a circle, built over the empty tomb of Christ across a courtyard from the west end of the Constantinian basilica.⁷³ The Rotunda does not seem to have been completed in the lifetime of Constantine, since it is not mentioned in Eusebius's description of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the *Vita Constantini*.⁷⁴ The narrative of the pilgrim Egeria, however, clearly implies that by the end of the fourth century the tomb was enclosed within a building, called the Anastasis, in which services were held.⁷⁵ The Rotunda would have

been an integral part of the overall complex by the fifth century, and is still the core of what survives of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The Anastasis Rotunda comprehends many of the elements of the round buildings we have surveyed, especially those that seem to contribute to the description of the Lysos temple: it is both a holy place, a temple, and a tomb, albeit a vacant one; it is circular and marked by a row of columns; and it is a building that visitors can enter and walk around inside. The chief difference between the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Lysos temple, of course, is that the latter is occupied.

The circular form of the Lysos temple is distinctive enough to conjure up images of a certain sort of building that was itself sufficiently rare in Graeco-Roman architecture. There were round buildings and tholoi at Greek sanctuaries; the temple of Athena at Knidos and the Tychaion of Alexandria show that a few of these structures, at least, were temples, and this may have been sufficient grounds for the description of the Lysos temple. The round form may have been connected to Alexander because some of these circular sacred edifices, namely the Philippeum at Olympia and the Alexandria Tychaion, were associated with Alexander himself. Especially famous round temples were to be found in Rome, and so the temple at Lysos may be round simply to give the impression of something a bit unusual. Given the late date of the β recension, in which the Lysos episode first appears, however, a monumental round building would probably have been more readily recognizable as a tomb or mausoleum, especially when it contained a shrouded body, even one that showed some signs of life. The round temple and the tomb were not always distinguished. George the Cappadocian, the virulently antipagan Arian bishop of Alexandria (357–361) and foe of Athanasius, was said to have looked at the city's Tychaion (apparently a round building) and asked "how long will this sepulcher remain standing?," to the horror of the pagans who overheard him.⁷⁶ Mark Johnson has persuasively argued that late antique imperial mausolea were also invested with the character and functions of temples

The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, c. 300 BC–AD 700 (New Haven, 2007), 287–88.

73 Armstrong, "Constantine's Churches," 12, 15–16; C. Coüasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem*, Schweich Lectures 1972, trans. J.-P. and C. Ross (London, 1974), 21–36; V. Corbo, *Il Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme: Aspetti archeologici dalle origini al periodo crociato* (Jerusalem, 1981), 1:51–79, 223–25; F. Tolotti, "Il S. Sepolcro di Gerusalemme e le coeve basiliche di Roma," *MDAIRA* 93 (1986): 475–78 (on the Anastasis Rotunda specifically, though there is discussion of the relation of this structure to other round buildings throughout); Ousterhout, "The Temple"; S. Gibson and J. Taylor, *Beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem: The Archaeology and Early History of Traditional Golgotha* (London, 1994), 77; J. Patrich, "The Early Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Light of Excavations and Restoration," in *Ancient Churches Revealed*, ed. Y. Tsafir (Jerusalem, 1993), 106–8; M. Biddle, "The Tomb of Christ: Sources, Methods and a New Approach," in *Churches Built in Ancient Times: Recent Studies in Early Christian Archaeology*, ed. K. Painter (London, 1994), 83–84, 101–5; E. Kleinbauer, "The Anastasis Rotunda and Christian Architectural Invention," in *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art: Studies in Honor of Bezalel Narkiss on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. B. Kühnel (Jerusalem, 1998), 140–46; M. Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ* (Stroud, 1999), 21–28, 65–73; C. Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West: From the Beginning to 1600* (Oxford, 2005), 35–38; J. Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age* (Cambridge, 2012), 255–57, 356–57.

74 Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 3.33.3–40. See P. Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 1990), 251–52, 280; A. Cameron and S. Hall, *Eusebius, Life of Constantine* (Oxford, 1999), 284–91.

75 Egeria, for instance, speaks of the doors of the Anastasis being opened and closed and the space being lit by lamps in the afternoon: *Itinerarium Egeriae* 24.1, 4, cf. 9; ed. O. Prinz, *Itinerarium Egeriae*

(*Peregrinatio Aetheriae*) (Heidelberg, 1960), 31, 33. See Coüasnon, *Church of the Holy Sepulchre*, 3, 16–17, 23–24; J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1999), 142–44.

76 Amm. Marc., 22.11.7. See Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 287.

where deceased emperors received cult of some sort or other.⁷⁷ But the architectural roles of tomb and temple were most clearly combined in the Anastasis Rotunda of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The prominence of this building and its similarity to the Lysos temple seem to compel a contrast and comparison between the empty tomb of the Risen Christ at Jerusalem and the body—dead or sleeping?—in the Lysos temple. At the very least, if the closest parallel to the Lysos temple appears to be the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, we are required to read the Lysos episode in a Christian as well as a pagan context.

Sapphire Building Blocks

This requirement of a doubly informed reading is confirmed by a consideration of the circuit wall, steps, and columns of the temple, which are said to be made of sapphire (περίβολον μέγαν ἐκ σαπφείρου λίθου ἔχοντα ἀναβαθμούς; ἔχον στύλους σαπφειρίνους). As a rule, in ancient Greek and Latin sources, the word *sapphire* refers not to the translucent blue corundum gem we might be inclined to think of, but to the speckled blue lapis lazuli stone.⁷⁸ So it is just plausible that pieces of so-called sapphire might be found large enough to form steps or the drums of which columns were made, but such an architectural use of the stone in antiquity is unheard of, and the sapphire steps and columns seem to be intended as one of the fantastic elements of the Lysos temple. But apart from its relative rarity and mildly exotic origins, there was nothing especially fabulous about the sapphire.⁷⁹ Theophrastus indicates that among those stones carved into signets the *σάπφειρος*, which is speckled as with gold, and the *σάσπις* (chalcedony) are remarkable only for their appearance, but otherwise have no special powers,

in contrast to the *σμάραγδος*.⁸⁰ Pliny notes that the *sappirus* is a blue gem and that the best are found in Persia.⁸¹ The *Periegesis* of Dionysius mentions rich veins of sapphire in the land of the Ariani (roughly modern Afghanistan).⁸² Stephanus of Byzantium includes a note on the island of Sappheirene in Arabia, from which, he says, the sapphire stone comes.⁸³ Sapphire, then, seems consistent with the exotic locales of the interior through which Alexander is traveling when he comes upon Lysos and its temple, but the stone does not appear to have any special association with Dionysus. Remarkably, in the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus, in which a great many words do appear, the word *σάπφειρος* does not occur once, nor do any of its derivatives.⁸⁴ In the *Alexander Romance* itself, a sapphire stone is used to represent the planet Venus on the model of the heavens Nectanebo uses to cast a nativity for himself and Olympias, but it is difficult to see how this passage can be related to the description of the Lysos temple.⁸⁵ Perhaps the closest thing to the sapphire wall, steps, and columns offered by Greco-Roman literature is in Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*; in that work the judgment hall of the palace at Babylon is said to have a domed ceiling covered with sapphire, a blue stone like the sky, against which the golden images of the gods of the Persians appear to be in the heavens.⁸⁶

80 Theophr., *De lapidibus* 23, cf. 37. See D. Eichholz, *Theophrastus, De Lapidibus* (Oxford, 1965), 59, 65, 71, 93, 102, 113.

81 Pliny, *HN* 37.39 (120); cf. Isid., *Etym.* 16.9.2 (this passage is essentially lifted from Pliny).

82 Dionys. Per., 1105.

83 Steph. Byz., *apud* Σαπφειρηνή.

84 See W. Peek, *Lexikon zu den Dionysiaka des Nonnos* (Hildesheim, 1968–75). Sapphire is found in Rouse's Loeb translation (2:69) as a rendering for *ὑακίνθω* at Nonnus, *Dion.* 18.77.

85 *Al. Rom.* 1.4.6.

86 Philostr., *VA* 1.25.3; ed. C. Kayser, *Flavii Philostrati Opera* (Leipzig, 1870–71; repr. Hildesheim, 1964) 1:29: φασὶ δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἐντυχεῖν, οὗ τὸν ὄροφον ἐς θόλου ἀνῆλθαι σχῆμα οὐρανῶ τινι εἰκασμένον, σαπφειρίνη δὲ αὐτὸν κατηρέφθαι λίθῳ—κυανωτάτῃ δὲ ἡ λίθος καὶ οὐρανία ἰδεῖν—καὶ θεῶν ἀγάλματα, οὓς νομίζουσιν, ἰδρυταὶ ἄνω καὶ χρυσᾷ φαίνεται, καθάπερ ἐξ αἰθέρος (“They said they came to a men’s apartment as well, the ceiling of which was drawn up into the form of a *tholos* so as to resemble the sky after a fashion, and the ceiling itself was covered with a sapphire stone—the bluest stone and heavenly in appearance—and the images of the gods they acknowledge were set up high and appeared golden, as if out of the upper air”). The word used for “ceiling,” *ὄροφος*, usually means “roof,” but the roofs of the palace have already been said to be made of bronze and the visitors seem to appreciate its rooms from the inside; the effect

77 Johnson, *Roman Imperial Mausoleum*, 180–94.

78 K. Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World* (Helsinki, 1997), 242.

79 “Sapphire” stone apparently had a single source in the mines of Badakhshan (in modern Afghanistan), far from both Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean, and appears prominently in lists of luxury goods from the beginning of recorded history; see G. Herrmann, “Lapis Lazuli: The Early Phases of Its Trade,” *Iraq* 30 (1968): 21–57. The rarity and value of “sapphire” or lapis lazuli apparently continued into the Byzantine era in which the β recension was composed; see A. Cutler, “Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies,” *DOP* 55 (2001): 276 n. 163.

We have here not only sapphire used for architectural purposes but also a rounded building and some association with the divine on account of the images of the gods; the parallels between the description of the palace at Babylon and the Lysos temple are, nevertheless, not particularly strong.

When we turn to the Christian scriptures, however, sapphire recurs over and over again in ways suggestive of the temple at Lysos, as a building material and in manifestations of the divine presence. To be sure, sapphire also appears in the Bible simply as a highly prized gem and an example of the precious things to be got from the earth.⁸⁷ And the sapphire is perhaps most prominent as one of the twelve stones on the breastplate of the high priest's vestments.⁸⁸ But sapphire also has a persistent significance in contexts that are recalled by the Lysos temple. Sapphire is uncharacteristically used for the columns, steps, and walls of this temple, and in the Bible we also find sapphire used as a building material. The Lord promises, through the prophet Isaiah, to build the house of the afflicted with precious stones "and lay thy foundations with sapphires."⁸⁹ Tobit praises God, "for Jerusalem will be built up with sapphire and emerald" and other precious gems and gold.⁹⁰ And in St. John's Apocalypse the second of the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem is of sapphire.⁹¹ All of these buildings may be metaphorical or prophetic, but they are just as substantial as the fictional temple at Lysos. The uncanny figure on the couch, the ominous talking bird, and the noises and the smoking mountain point to a divine presence at the temple built with sapphire stones; sapphire also occurs in biblical encounters with the divine. Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu,

and the seventy elders of Israel have a vision of God on Mount Sinai, and when they see the God of Israel, there is "under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone."⁹² And in Ezekiel's vision of God's glory, the throne above the firmament over the heads of the four living creatures, upon which is the "likeness of a man," is "as the appearance of sapphire stone."⁹³ The appearance of elements of sapphire at Lysos seems more appropriate from the Christian perspective, which would associate sapphire with biblical images of buildings and divinity, than the classical or purely pagan, as we might say.

Sapphire also has sinister associations in the Bible. In Ezekiel's prophecy against the king of Tyre, which is usually interpreted as referring to Satan, it is said, "every precious stone was thy covering," including sapphire among many others.⁹⁴ Perhaps it is for this reason that Clement of Alexandria makes a point of including sapphire among the precious metals and gemstones the craftsmen of Sesostrius are said to have ground up and mixed together to mold the image of Sarapis, undoubtedly one of the principal gods of the Alexandrian paganism of his own day.⁹⁵ The sapphire steps and columns of the Lysos temple, then, might take on a different significance depending on one's attitude toward the man recumbent within the temple.

Dionysus, the Man on the Couch

This brings us to the question of the identity and the condition of the man on the couch in the Lysos temple. His identity is a relatively straightforward matter. As this structure is said to be a temple, we expect the one within to be a god. Which one? He is unnamed, which lends an element of mystery to this episode, but the figures depicted in the relief carvings within and without the temple—Bacchants, Satyrs, women engaged in ecstatic worship, and old Maron—are all companions of Dionysus, so the decoration of the temple unavoidably indicates that the god is Dionysus.⁹⁶

of an artificial sky on the roof against the real sky, moreover, could hardly have been deemed very impressive at all. Sidonius Apollinaris (*Epist.* 2.10.4, l. 14) seems to describe a similar decoration of mosaic with sapphire or sapphire-colored stones on the semidome over the apse of a church.

87 Job 28:6, 16, Song of Sol. 5:14, Lam. 4:7.

88 Exod. 28:18, 39:11, 36:18 (LXX). The sapphire stone on the high priest's breastplate also figures in some of the late antique elaborations and interpretations of this passage, for example, Jerome, *Epist.* 64.15–20; Cyprianus Gallus, *Heptateuchos* E 1099; see M. Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, 1989), 9–13.

89 Isa. 54:11–12.

90 Tob. 13:16.

91 Apoc. 21:19.

92 Exod. 24:10.

93 Ezek. 1:26, 10:1. In LXX Ezek. 9:2, the girdle of the angel of judgment is also of sapphire.

94 Ezek. 28:13.

95 Clem. Al., *Protr.* 4.48.

96 On the traditional iconography of Dionysus and his retinue, see T. Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Archaic Greek Art:*

The appearance of Dionysus in a passage meant to be integrated into the *Alexander Romance* is hardly surprising; Dionysus comes up fairly often in the *Romance*, especially in the earliest version. When he is besieging Tyre, Alexander has a dream in which a Satyr hands him a cheese (τυρός) that he tramples, which presages the capture of the city; the Satyr may be there for the sake of wordplay, but he is explicitly said to be one of the servitors of Dionysus (ξνα [τῶν] τοῦ Διονύσου προπόλων), although in later versions “Dionysus” is changed to “Zeus.”⁹⁷ In the earliest version of the *Romance*, the Theban musician Ismenias insists that Dionysus, along with Heracles, is an ancestor of Alexander, and for the sake of these nurslings of Thebes he begs the conqueror to spare the city, albeit in vain.⁹⁸ The Indian king Porus makes the hubristic claim that he is king over not only men, but gods as well, and specifies that he can threaten the invaders with Dionysus, “whom they call a god” (ὃν λέγουσι θεόν), and Alexander bristles at this bombast.⁹⁹ A reference to Dionysus is also added to the latest and fullest version of the *Romance*, represented by the γ recension; the orators in favor of resisting Alexander remind the

Its Development in Black-Figure Vase Painting (Oxford, 1986); G. Hedreen, *Silens in Black-Figure Vase-Painting: Myth and Performance* (Ann Arbor, 1992); T. Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens* (Oxford, 1997).

97 *Al. Rom.* (α) 1.35.7.

98 *Al. Rom.* (α) 1.46a.4–5. Mention of Dionysus and Heracles has fallen out of the later recensions.

99 *Al. Rom.* 3.2.2. The different recensions are inconsistent on this point. The α recension has Porus claim that when he invaded in times past, Dionysus was driven off by the Indians; ed. W. Kroll, *Historia Alexandri Magni (Pseudo-Callisthenes): Recensio Vetusta* (Berlin, 1926), 100: παρόντα γὰρ ὃν λέγουσι Διόνυσον ἀπῆλασαν τῇ ἰδίᾳ δυνάμει οἱ Ἰνδοί (“when the one whom they call Dionysus was here the Indians drove him off by their own native might”); cf. Julius Valerius, *Iuli Valerii res gestae Alexandri Macedonis translatae ex Aesopo Graeco*, ed. M. Rosellini (Stuttgart, 1993), 126: *quibus diis inefficacem audaciam fuisse adversum nos documenta sunt antiquissima vel vestra, quippe cum illum ipsum Liberum vestrum, qui apud vos deus existimetur, temere in haec irrumpentem irritum superatumque hinc Indi in fugam verterint* (“Yours are the most ancient proofs that the daring of these gods proved unavailing against us, since when that Liber of yours himself, who is considered among you a god, made bold to invade these regions, the Indians turned him, failed and beaten, hence in flight”). The β recension has Porus declare that Dionysus stands on the side of the Indians, threatening Alexander; ed. Bergson, *Alexanderroman, Rezension β* (n. 5 above), 137: Διόνυσον ἔχων ἀπειλοῦντα σοι ἐνταῦθα, ὃν λέγουσι θεόν (“I have Dionysus here, whom they call a god, threatening you”).

Greeks that their ancestors (i.e., either the Athenians’ or the Thebans’; the passage is confused) defeated the god Dionysus when he attacked them.¹⁰⁰ There is some mention of Dionysus in the *Romance*, and the earlier references could attract even more discussion of the god by later redactors as the text developed. But the Dionysus of the *Romance* is an ambiguous character: a god, or one merely called a god, but a vulnerable and not invincible one, a god in whose name appeals might prove unavailing.

The Dionysus of the Lysos episode is consistent with this ambiguous Dionysus of the *Romance*. Even if he does reside in a temple, he is never called a god, but rather a man (ἄνθρωπος). And he appears in marked contrast to Sarapis, a god of unquestionable divinity, whom Alexander encounters more than once in the *Romance*. He is not represented by an impressive image, like the god Alexander finds at the sanctuary in the hills opposite the island of Proteus, who is depicted with a three-headed beast in one hand and a scepter in the other and his consort at his side.¹⁰¹ Nor is he enthroned in awesome majesty, surrounded by a fiery, glowing mist and receiving worship, as Alexander finds Sarapis in the cave “where the gods dwell,” whither he was directed from Ethiopia.¹⁰² The figure in the Lysos temple lies quiescent, completely covered by a sheet. If anything, his description seems to invite a comparison or contrast with Christ in the tomb; the word used of the cloth that covers him (σινδῶν), although by no means rare, is, with a single exception, used in the New Testament only of the winding sheet in which Jesus was wrapped before his burial.¹⁰³ The appearance of the man in the

100 *Al. Rom.* (γ) 1.27.5. This passage in the γ recension was likely taken from the eighth-century ε recension, which exhibits distinct Christianizing tendencies; see *Al. Rom.* (ε) 12.2; ed. J. Trumpf, *Vita Alexandri Regis Macedonum* (Stuttgart, 1974), 43. In the γ recension the debates of the orators are elaborated to a considerable extent as compared to the earlier recensions. Dionysus’s attack on Athens seems to be an invention of the *Romance*, as pointed out by R. Stoneman, *Il Romanzo di Alessandro*, vol. 1, trans. T. Gargiulo (Milan, 2007), 520.

101 *Al. Rom.* 1.33.5.

102 *Al. Rom.* 3.24, cf. (γ) 3.21. The description of Sarapis is lacking from this passage in the β recension as it presently survives. The original version of this episode is perhaps best represented by the Armenian translation (247–49); see Wolohojian, *Romance of Alexander the Great*, 140–41.

103 Matt. 27:59, Mark 15:46, Luke 23:53. Otherwise, there is one instance of the word σινδῶν, used of the cloth with which the

Lysos temple calls his condition into question. Is he dead or sleeping?

Either answer in regard to Dionysus is explicable on the basis of Greek myth, literature, and tradition. Certainly, there were grounds for construing Dionysus as dead.¹⁰⁴ In the trieteric cult that had dominated the ritual cycle of the worship of Dionysus outside of Athens from time immemorial, Dionysus was taken to be absent, that is dead and in the underworld, in the alternate years of the two-year cycle, although he was perpetually recalled to life in the other year.¹⁰⁵ Zagreus, the first, primeval avatar of Dionysus, was killed, dismembered, and consumed by the Titans in an episode that was central to Orphic myth and cult.¹⁰⁶ The presence of the body in the temple shows that this is not the fate that is supposed to have overtaken the man Alexander finds at Lysos, but the myth of Zagreus does suggest that Dionysus was more vulnerable, more susceptible to the perils of mortality, than other gods. Dionysus was also identified with the Egyptian god Osiris, a fundamental aspect of whose myth, as known from Greek as well as Egyptian sources, was his murder and dismemberment at the hands of his brother, Set; indeed, Osiris was understood to remain in the underworld as the ruler of the dead.¹⁰⁷

young man who followed Jesus after his arrest was covered; Mark 14:51, 52.

104 See Otto, *Dionysus*, 189–201 (n. 13 above).

105 K. Kerényi, *Dionysos: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life*, trans. R. Manheim (Princeton, 1976), 141–42, 189–204.

106 Nonnus, *Dion.* 6.169–228. See Otto, *Dionysus*, 130–32; Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 80–89, 238–61; M. Detienne, *Dionysos Slain*, trans. M. Muellner and L. Muellner (Baltimore, 1979), 68–94; M. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, 1983), 74, 152–54.

107 Identification of Dionysus with Osiris: Hdt., 2.42.2, 144.2, cf 2.47.2, 48.2–3, 49; Diod. Sic., 1.11.3, 13.5, 15.6, 17.4–5, 25.2, 27.3; Tib., 1.7.21–48; Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 13, 28, 34–37 (*Mor.* 356B, 362B, 364D–365F); see E. Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection* (London, 1911), 1:9; Otto, *Dionysus*, 195–96; J. Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride* (Cardiff, 1970), 429–30; A. Burton, *Diodorus Siculus, Book I: A Commentary* (Leiden, 1972), 16–17, 61, 88–89, 97–98, 109; M. Putnam, *Tibullus, A Commentary* (Norman, OK, 1973), 122–26; A. Lloyd, *Herodotus, Book II: Commentary 1–98* (Leiden, 1976), 218; A. Lloyd, *Herodotus, Book II: Commentary 99–182* (Leiden, 1988), 110–12; R. Merkelbach, *Isis regina—Zeus Sarapis: Die griechisch-ägyptische Religion nach den Quellen dargestellt* (Stuttgart, 1995), 71–72. Death of Osiris: Diod. Sic., 1.21.2; Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 13 (*Mor.* 356B–D); see Budge, *Osiris*, 1:62–99; B. Shafer, *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myth, and Personal Practice* (Ithaca, 1991), 29, 44,

Herodotus mentions an enormous tomb behind the temple in the Egyptian city of Sais, and while he makes a point of not naming whose tomb this is, demonstrating his usual reticence about divulging divine mysteries, it is clear from his reference to the performance of the sufferings of the god in the next chapter that the tomb belongs to Osiris.¹⁰⁸ Under other circumstances Herodotus's refusal to name the occupant of the tomb might be frustratingly obscurantist, but as it is, we might take the very fact that the figure in the Lysos temple is unnamed as a reference to Dionysus's Egyptian persona as he appears in the pages of Herodotus. The grave of Osiris also appears in the *Alexander Romance*; on his way to the future site of Alexandria, Alexander comes to Taphosirion and when he asks the inhabitants what the name means, they explain that it is the tomb (τάφος) of Osiris and, like the temple at Lysos, the tomb of Osiris is referred to as a sanctuary (ιερόν).¹⁰⁹ A tomb of Dionysus was also to be found in Greece, hard by the seat of Apollo's oracle at Delphi.¹¹⁰ This tomb of Dionysus seems to have been

92–93, 125; Merkelbach, *Isis regina—Zeus Sarapis*, 5–6; R. David, *Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2002), 156–57.

108 Hdt., 2.170.1; see Lloyd, *Herodotus, Book II: Commentary 99–182*, 206–7. Herodotus refers to τὰ δαίκελλα τῶν παθόντων αὐτοῦ at 2.171.1.

109 *Al. Rom.* (β) 1.31.2.

110 Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 35 (*Mor.* 365A); Tatian, *Ad Gr.* 8; Jer., *Ab Abr.* 720. Malalas, *Chron.* 2.15; George Syncellus, *Ecloga Chronographica* 307 = Cephalion, *FGrHist* 93 F 4; Philochoros, *FGrHist* 328 F 7; Deinarchos of Delos, *FGrHist* 399 F 1; cf. Callim., fr. 517 (ed. Pfeiffer 1:377). See F. Pfister, *Der Reliquienkult im Altertum* (Gießen, 1909–12) 1:168, 394; E. Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*, trans. W. B. Hillis (London, 1925), 110 n. 32; Otto, *Dionysus*, 190, 203; West, *Orphic Poems*, 150–52; S. Reinert, “The Image of Dionysus in Malalas' Chronicle,” in *Byzantine Studies in Honor of Milton V. Anastos*, ed. S. Vryonis Jr. (Malibu, 1985), 20–23; M. Piérart, “Le tombeau de Dionysos à Delphes,” in *Ποικίλα: Hommage à Othon Scholer, Études classiques* 8, ed. C. Bodelot (Luxembourg, 1996), 137–54; M. Piérart, “La mort de Dionysos à Lysos,” in *The Role of Religion in the Early Greek Polis*, ed. R. Hägg (Stockholm, 1999), 141–51; G. Arrigoni, “Perseo contro Dioniso a Lerna,” in *Ricordando Raffaella Cantarella: Miscellanea di Studi*, Università degli Studi di Milano, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Quaderni di Acme 36, ed. F. Conca (Milan, 1999), 9–70; G. Arrigoni, “La machera e lo specchio: Il caso di Perseo e Dioniso a Delfi e l'enigma dei Satiri,” *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 102, n.s. 73 (2003): 9–55; M. Herrero de Jáuregui, *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity* (Berlin, 2010), 170–71; M. Winiarczyk, *The Sacred History of Euhemerus of Messene*, trans. W. Zbirohowski-Kościa (Berlin, 2013), 33–34. Pseudo-Clement (*Rec.*

connected with the myth, attested as early as the sixth century BC, that held that Dionysus met Perseus in battle and was killed by him.¹¹¹ The representation of Dionysus by a column topped with a mask and draped in a long garment, common in Archaic depictions of his cult, moreover, could be understood as a tomb of the dead god, absent in the underworld.¹¹²

As a rationalistic approach to myth, which understood the traditional gods as deified mortals, arose from the fourth century BC on, Dionysus was thought to be among those gods who had once been men and had died. Prodicus of Ceos held that the gods originated when men began to worship first the natural elements which made their survival possible and then those inventors and benefactors who contributed to the amelioration of human existence, deifying them presumably after death; the fragments name only Demeter and Dionysus as examples of the latter order of gods, the deified mortals.¹¹³ Euhemerus, whose name is usually associated with this approach to the gods of myth, does not seem to have mentioned Dionysus, as far as we can tell from the extant fragments, although in his preface to the excerpts he takes from Euhemerus, Diodorus offers Dionysus as an example of the earthly, as opposed to heavenly, gods who won everlasting honor and fame because of what they did for mankind.¹¹⁴ Euhemerus may have contributed to the Lysos

passage in other ways, since in his description the temple of Zeus Triphylus on Panchaea is dominated by a couch (κλίνη) upon which is set the golden stele that gives an account of the gods as ancient human kings and its title to Euhemerus's own work, the *Hiera Anagraphe*, or *Sacred Writing*.¹¹⁵ Just so, a couch (κλίνη) is found in the middle of the Lysos temple and on it some evidence, rather more ambivalent and mysterious than what Euhemerus says, indicative of the nature of the gods. In the account of the gods given by Dionysius Scytobrachion, writing in the generation after Euhemerus and under his influence, Dionysus is the principal figure among the mortals who came to be considered gods, and while Dionysius euphemistically speaks of Dionysus's "exchanging human nature for deathlessness," it is clear that he is supposed to have died.¹¹⁶ Megasthenes seems to have included in his description of India the story that Dionysus conquered the country and ruled over it as king, adding the detail that after a reign of fifty-two years he died there of old age.¹¹⁷ That portion of Diodorus, Book 1 that purports to tell the story of Osiris (who is explicitly identified with Dionysus) relates his murder by Typhon and his burial.¹¹⁸ The secret revelations of an Egyptian priest who went under the name of Leon of Pella, conveyed in

10.24.2, *Hom.* 5.23.3) refers to a tomb of Dionysus at Thebes, but this is most likely an error, due to the usual association of Dionysus and Thebes, or a reference to Egyptian Thebes, rather than the sole attestation of another grave of Dionysus in Greece (see below).

111 *Schol. in Il.* 14.319. George Syncellus, *Ecloga Chronographica* 307 = Philochoros, *FGrHist* 328 F 7; Deinarchos of Delos, *FGrHist* 399 F 1. See Otto, *Dionysus*, 79; Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 179–80; G. Casadio, *Storia del culto di Dioniso in Argolide* (Roma, 1994), 252–63; Arrigoni, "La machera e lo specchio," 21–46.

112 Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 281–82.

113 A. Henrichs, "Two Doxographical Notes: Democritus and Prodicus on Religion," *HSCP* 79 (1975): 111, 113; A. Henrichs, "The Sophists and Hellenistic Religion: Prodicus as the Spiritual Father of the Isis Aretalogies," *HSCP* 88 (1984): 141, 143–45.

114 Diod. Sic., 6.1.2. There is some debate over whether the thought contained in the preface, and especially the *theologia dipertita* of heavenly and earthly gods, should be assigned to Diodorus or to Euhemerus; see T. Cole, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology* (Atlanta, 1990), 156–7 n. 29; Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 1:291; K. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* (Princeton, 1990), 70–71 n. 78; A. Baumgarten, "Euhemerus' Eternal Gods: or How Not To Be Embarrassed by Greek Mythology," in *Classical Studies in Honor of David Sohlberg*, ed. R. Katzoff (Ramat

Gan, 1996), 91–103; Winiarczyk, *Sacred History of Euhemerus*, 27–28.

115 Diod. Sic., 5.46.6–7. Although the temple of Triphylian Zeus has the standard rectangular form and is built of the usual white marble (Diod. Sic., 5.44.1), it, like the Lysos temple, is decorated with reliefs (not very unusual) which are not described, and around the temple (literally said to be "in the circle of the temple," κύκλῳ δὲ τοῦ ναοῦ) are the houses (οἰκίας) of the priests (44.2). Just so, there is a "great house" (οἶκος μέγας) in the vicinity of the Lysos temple. Along the avenue leading from the temple are huge bronze vessels (44.3), reminiscent of the great vessels at Lysos described in such detail. Winiarczyk, *Sacred History of Euhemerus*, 87–90, discusses the temple of Triphylian Zeus as the setting of the stele recording the deeds of the gods, but his attention is understandably drawn to the stele itself and he has little to say about the couch on which it sits.

116 Diod. Sic., 3.73.8: μεταστάντων ἐκ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως εἰς τὴν ἀθανασία. See J. Rusten, *Dionysius Scytobrachion* (Opladen, 1982), 109–12.

117 Diod. Sic., 2.38.6 = *FGrHist* 715 F 4.

118 Diod. Sic., 1.21.2–10; cf. Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 13 (*Mor.* 356B–D). While much of Diodorus, Book 1 seems to be based on Hecataeus of Abdera, O. Murray, "Hecataeus of Abdera and Pharaonic Kingship," *JEA* 56 (1970): 149–50, maintains that this account of Osiris comes from a later work based on Hecataeus. Cf. Burton, *Diodorus Siculus*, 16–17, 88.

a letter from Alexander to his mother, which disclosed that the gods were dead men, seem to have mentioned Dionysus as one of the gods who were once human beings.¹¹⁹ In light of this tradition, the presence of a corpse in the midst of a temple, apparently of Dionysus, might not have seemed altogether surprising.

The death and entombment of Dionysus were not merely curious pieces of religious or antiquarian lore, however; they were also points of proof exploited by Christian apologists in their antipagan arguments. The contention that the gods the pagans worshipped were in fact dead men and that their tombs could be identified throughout the world was basic to the rhetoric of Christians' attacks against traditional Greco-Roman religion in general,¹²⁰ but the grave of Dionysus specifically received some mention. Decrying the gods of myth in a welter of cases, Tatian referred to the Omphalos of Apollo's sanctuary as the tomb of Dionysus (ὁ δ' ὀμφαλὸς τάφος ἐστὶν Διονύσου).¹²¹ The Clementine literature mentions the tomb of Dionysus at Thebes as an example of the graves of the false gods.¹²² Eusebius of Caesarea included in his *Chronicle* an extensive note on Dionysus the son of Semele, which, citing sources, related that he was slain in battle with Perseus and that those who wish may see his tomb in Delphi.¹²³

119 August., *De civ. D.* 8.5 = *FGrHist* 659 T 2a.

120 Justin, *Apol.* 1.24.2; Theoph., *Ad Aut.* 1.9, 10; Athenagoras, *Leg. pro Christ.* 30.3; *Didache* 6.3 (cf. II Clement 3); Clem. Al., *Protr.* 2.26.7, 29.1, 30.3–7, 37.4, 4.49.3, 55.2–3; Tert., *Apol.* 10.4; Min. Fel., *Oct.* 21.8; Commodian, *Instr.* 1.6; Origen, *C. Cels.* 3.43; Cyprian, *De idolorum vanitate* 1–2; Lactant., *Div. inst.* 1.11.44–49; pseudo-Clement, *Rec.* 10.24, 25, *Hom.* 5.23, 6.21, 10.9.1–2; Euseb., *Praep. evan.* 3.10.21; Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 10–11; Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 7.6, 16.3; August., *De civ. Dei* 7.33, 8.26; Prudent., *C. Symm.* 1.157–58, *Perist.* 5.35–36.

121 Tatian, *Ad Gr.* 8.

122 Pseudo-Clement, *Rec.* 10.24.2, *Hom.* 5.23.3. Thebes here may simply be an error for Delphi, where as we have seen there was reputed to be a grave of Dionysus, since Boeotian Thebes was more commonly associated with Dionysus, or it may be a reference to Egyptian Thebes and one of the many graves of the Egyptian Dionysus (Osiris); the pseudo-Clementine material includes a remarkably wide-ranging assortment of tombs at this point and is by no means limited to Greece.

123 Although the *Chronicle* of Eusebius is lost, the evidence for this note may be found in Jerome's Latin translation: Jer., *Ab Abr.* 720; the work of George Syncellus: *Ecl.* 307; and the Armenian translation of the *Chronicle*: ann. Abr. 712, ed. J. Karst, *Eusebii Werke*, vol. 5, *Die Chronik aus dem armenischen übersetzt mit text-kritischem Commentar* (Leipzig, 1911), 168.

In the *Praeparatio Evangelica*, Eusebius quotes the parts of Diodorus, Book 1 that identify Osiris with Dionysus and relate the murder and burial of Osiris.¹²⁴ Augustine not only notes Liber (Dionysus) among the gods identified as deified human beings in Alexander's letter to his mother, but also includes in his chronological survey a note (taken from Jerome's translation of Eusebius's *Chronicle*) on Liber's being slain in battle with Perseus and his burial.¹²⁵ Cyril of Alexandria refers to Dionysus's death at the hands of Perseus and his burial at Delphi in order to show that the so-called gods are subject to death and corruption, and to counter Julian the Apostate's accusation that the Christians practiced a cult of the dead and their churches were nothing more than charnel houses by revealing the temples of his gods to be, in fact, tombs.¹²⁶ Christian polemics, then, had a certain investment in the discovery of a tomb of Dionysus containing his corpse, even in such a fictional locale as Lysos.

But is the body in the Lysos temple dead, or sleeping? The body lies within a temple that resembles a tomb, and is covered by a sheet, but when Alexander goes to remove the bird and the light from the temple, the body begins to move. Revenants, that is, reanimated corpses capable of some movement, were not unknown in Greek literature, but sleeping gods probably had a more prominent place.¹²⁷ Plutarch, in two different essays, passes on the report that in a cave on one of the islands in the western ocean, Cronos slumbers in a sleep contrived by Zeus as a bondage for his father, and when the dreams of Cronos are disturbed by a prophetic awareness of the plans of Zeus his body becomes tense or perhaps rises up.¹²⁸ The sleeping Cronos seems to be

124 Euseb., *Praep. evang.* 2.1.5, 16, 21. Remarkably, however, in the same book of the *Praeparatio Evangelica* those portions concerned with Dionysus specifically (2.3–11, 3.23–29) do not mention his death or burial, nor does Eusebius mention Dionysus at all in the précis of Dionysius Scytobrachion's "Atlantian theology" he takes from Diodorus, Book 3 (2.36–51).

125 August., *De civ. D.* 8.5, 18.13, cf. 12.

126 Cyril Alex., *Contra Jul.* 1.12, 10.[341–42] (PG 76:520A, 1025D). See W. Malley, *Hellenism and Christianity* (Rome, 1978), 192 and n. 129, 392, 395; Arrigoni, "La machera e lo specchio," 23–24.

127 D. Felton, *Haunted Greece and Rome: Ghost Stories from Classical Antiquity* (Austin, 1999), 25–29.

128 Plut., *De def. or.* 18 (*Mor.* 420A), *De fac.* 26 (*Mor.* 940F–942A). At *De fac.* 26 (*Mor.* 942A) εἶναι δ' ἀνάτασιν ("there is a straining or stretching out") is a modern emendation; the manuscript reads εἶναι δ' ἀνάστασιν ("there is a rising up"), which is remarkably similar to

in much the same condition as the man in the Lysos temple. A restive and not altogether defunct Dionysus at Lysos would also seem to be more consistent with Alexander's established encounters with the gods in the *Romance*. When Alexander goes from Ethiopia to "the place where the gods dwell," in an episode found already in the α recension and retained in the β recension, he finds a number of men lying ($\alpha\nu\alpha\kappa\epsilon\iota\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$; the word is that used of those reclining to eat) there with light flashing out of their eyes, and one of them, Sesonchosis, greets him and serves as his guide.¹²⁹ A recumbent position and a sleeping condition might seem particularly appropriate to Dionysus. I am not aware of any work of art in which he is supposed to be sleeping, but Dionysus is often depicted reclining as a symposiast, in the same position as the men in the *Romance*'s "place where the gods dwell."¹³⁰ And in the course of the ritual cycle of his worship Dionysus was supposed to be awakened, perhaps in an earlier understanding from death, but later almost certainly from sleep.¹³¹

If the Dionysus in the Lysos temple is sleeping, it is by no means clear how we are to take the fact. A pointed contrast with the God of the Psalmist might be intended: "Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."¹³² The slumber of Plutarch's sleeping Cronos is also a form of captivity for a defeated god, and so a sleeping god seems to be shown in something of a derogatory light. And sleeping, the figure on the couch might serve a similar apologetic purpose to that of the tomb and the corpse of Dionysus. Eusebius appends the passage on the sleeping Cronos (although he does not indicate its significance) to the excerpt from Plutarch he includes in the *Praeparatio Evangelica*, in order to prove the mortality of the demons who provide the Greeks with their oracles.¹³³ Even the temporary sleep of a god might forcefully demonstrate the limits to his power, as when Zeus falls asleep after his

tryst with Hera on Mount Ida and his commands are disobeyed on the field of Troy.¹³⁴ But we ought to be cautious about insisting that a sleeping Dionysus is a beaten and powerless Dionysus; there are memorable instances in myth, such as when he is held prisoner by Pentheus or when he is a captive on the pirate ship, when Dionysus seems helpless, but remains a force to be reckoned with.¹³⁵

What power the man on the couch can wield also seems to be a pertinent question. I have translated the phrase in which Alexander describes the movement he observes ($\delta\omicron\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\nu\ \alpha\nu\alpha\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\nu\alpha\iota$) "he seemed to be rousing himself," but this may not catch the full force nor the allusions inherent in the words. The phrase might just as well have been rendered "he seemed to revive" or even "he appeared to rise again." Found as he is in a structure that recalls the Anastasis Rotunda and covered with a cloth designated by the same word as the burial shroud of Jesus, it seems quite appropriate to consider what this man does in terms of the Resurrection. Such reflection, however, makes the unnamed figure on the couch, apparently the god Dionysus, come across as rather paltry. The same pregnant word may be used for their activities, but the barely perceptible twitch of the *Romance*'s Dionysus altogether lacks the blinding glory of Christ's Resurrection, with the empty tomb, the witness of angels, and the overwhelming encounters with the disciples. It is not even clear, moreover, that the man on the couch actually accomplishes any movement, no matter how feeble; Alexander reports that he seemed ($\delta\omicron\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$) to rise up, as if he may or may not have done it. The impression is of a slight motion seen at the periphery of one's vision, which may possibly not have occurred at all. The Evangelists, on the other hand, could call on a number of eyewitnesses who had had vivid and unmistakable experiences of the Risen Christ. Any allusion to the Resurrection in the Lysos episode, then, constitutes a striking contrast between Dionysus and Christ.

If, in the end, we cannot say whether the man in the Lysos temple is supposed to be dead or sleeping, this hardly seems accidental. There are signs to be read both ways: the man rests on a couch, completely covered by a sheet, in a structure like a tomb, but at one point he stirs. The author of the passage is obviously determined

the reaction of the man on the couch to Alexander's intentions in the *Romance*.

129 *Al. Rom.* 3.24.2.

130 *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, 3.1:456–57, 472, 486, 524, 549; 3.2:338–40, 365, 388–89, 415, 437 ("Dionysos" nos. 363–78, 580–81, 756–62, "Dionysos in peripheria orientali" 105, "Bacchus" 109).

131 Orph., *Hymn* 53.2; W. Quandt, *Orphei hymni* (Berlin, 1955), 38. See West, *Orphic Poems* (n. 106 above), 150.

132 Ps. 121:4 (LXX 120:4).

133 Euseb., *Praep. evang.* 5.17.12.

134 *Il.* 14.352–62.

135 Eur., *Bacch.* 434–641; *Hom. Hymn* 7.

to cultivate an air of mystery, since, although there can be little doubt about the identity of the man, he is unnamed. Leaving the reader in suspense as to whether he is sleeping or dead is certainly consistent with the atmosphere being created. Either condition is explicable in terms of the received traditions concerning Dionysus. Perhaps the author intended for the figure's condition to be open to different understandings, depending on the audience's attitude toward Dionysus. Where Christians might find a dead god, and so no god at all, pagans might see a somnolent god, retired and withdrawn into solitary rest, whose return might be imminent. The *Romance* itself may offer the best clue for understanding this apparently intentional ambiguity. Perhaps the man in the Lysos temple anticipates the sort of existence cryptically promised to Alexander himself in Serapis's prophecy of Alexandria: οικήσεις δὲ αὐτὴν καὶ θανὼν καὶ μὴ θανὼν. Τάφον γὰρ αὐτὴν ἔξεις ἢν κτιζεις πόλιν ("You will dwell in it, dead and not dead. For you will have the very city you founded for a tomb").¹³⁶

The Talking Bird

The same sort of ambiguity attaches itself to the marvelous bird found in the Lysos temple, despite the fact that it is one of the elements in the Lysos episode with the clearest precedents and intentions. It is quite obviously borrowed from the account of Alexander's visit to the palace of Cyrus, found in the earlier *α* recension, as well as the *β* recension, in which a bird like a dove is reputed to speak with a human voice (ἄνθρωπινῃ φωνῇ) and is kept in a golden cage.¹³⁷ The appearance of a similar bird in the Lysos temple connects this episode to the rest of the work, and serves to integrate an interpolation into the text to which it was added through the reduplication of an established element in *Romance* tradition; this connection and integration is reinforced by the insertion of the Lysos episode immediately before the visit to Cyrus's palace, the narrative proceeding from the one incident to the next without interruption. In the historical record, moreover, there is a background to the initial appearance of a bird that

speaks with a human voice in the *Romance*. Talking birds seem to have been part of the tradition of the reports of Alexander's expedition on the exotic places his army visited. Arrian refers to Nearchus's account of the parrot (ὁ σιττακός) as one of the marvels of India and how it can utter a human voice (ὅπως φωνήν ἔει ἀνθρωπίνην), and Curtius mentions birds that can be taught to imitate the human voice (*aves ad imitandum humanae vocis sonum dociles sunt*) among the remarkable features of the country as he begins his description of Alexander's invasion of India.¹³⁸ Alexander's encounter with a talking bird at the ends of the earth, then, is marvelous but not altogether unprecedented.

The bird at Lysos, however, is not quite the same as the bird at Cyrus's palace. In the first place, whereas Alexander relates that "they said" (ἔφασαν) the bird at Cyrus's palace spoke with a human voice, the bird at Lysos actually says something and Alexander reports hearing it himself. A bird that really talks has a more vivid and memorable effect than a bird that is supposed to talk. The bird's message, once again, ties the Lysos interpolation into the rest of the *Romance*, since it is consistent with several omens Alexander receives from wonderful and prodigious sources throughout the *Romance*, likewise warning him to go no further, not overstep the bounds set for mortals, and return whence he has come.¹³⁹ These marvelous omens are more frequent in the *β* recension than in the *α* recension, and if the bird in the Lysos temple seems to fit comfortably in the *Romance* overall, this is in some measure due to the revisions made to the *β* recension as a whole.

The bird's message, though addressed to Alexander, may also speak to the character of the man on the couch, an individual apparently subject to mortality who has been considered immortal. The insistence on a proper distinction between the divine and the human is consistent with the Christian argument that the pagan gods were deified men. The bird at Lysos also displays some striking affinities with certain representations of the Holy Ghost in the New Testament. At the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit of God is seen descending "like a dove" (ὥσεὶ περιστερὰν) upon him, accompanied by a voice from heaven (φωνὴ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν) saying,

136 *Al. Rom.* (β) 3.24.4; ed. Bergson, *Alexanderroman*, *Rezension β* (n. 5 above), 167. The text of the *β* recension is better preserved at this point, but differs little from the restored reading of the *α* recension.

137 *Al. Rom.* (α) 3.28.6–8; *Al. Rom.* (β) 3.28.10–11.

138 Arr., *Ind.* 15.8 = *FGrHist* 133 F 9; Curt., 8.9.16. See Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World*, 203–4.

139 *Al. Rom.* (β) 2.40.1–6, (β) 2.41.11–12 (found in the L MS, but not other witnesses to the *β* recension), 3.17.26–41.

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”¹⁴⁰ The bird like a dove in the Lysos temple and its message, terse but profound, seem at least suggestive of this epiphany. The Lysos interpolation specifies that the bird addressed Alexander not just in a human voice, but in Greek (Ἑλληνικῇ); this particular has no parallel in the description of the bird at Cyrus’s palace. But at Pentecost the visitors to Jerusalem “out of every nation under heaven” each hear the disciples, filled as they are with the Holy Ghost, speaking in their own languages.¹⁴¹ Likewise in the β recension’s account of a manifestation of divine presence, a prophetic message is made plain to a foreign visitor in his own language.

That the bird is like a dove and speaks in a manner comprehensible to a foreign visitor might seem to betray the influence of the Christian scriptures; nevertheless, a talking bird in the form of a dove with a prophetic message would hardly have been inexplicable in terms of a traditional Greek frame of reference. Herodotus relates (and proceeds to rationalize) the legend told by the priestesses of Dodona that two black doves (δύο πελειάδας μελαίνας) flew off from Thebes in Egypt, one to Dodona and one to Libya, and alighting on the oak at Dodona one dove announced in a human voice (φωνῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ) that an oracle of Zeus should be established at that place, the other dove doing likewise in Libya.¹⁴² A bird, a dove, that speaks in a human voice and a prophetic injunction at an impressive shrine are all to be found in this story (note, though, that the word for “dove” in the *Romance* is that found in the Gospels, not in Herodotus). Elsewhere in the *Romance* itself, Nectanebo sends an ensorcelled bird, not a dove, but a sea hawk (α: ἱέρακα πελάγιον, β: θαλάσσιον ἱέρακα), to speak to Philip and persuade him to accept his wife’s offspring as the child of a god, but the sea hawk speaks to Philip in a dream, not in plain speech, and seems to confer a vision upon Philip, rather than address him in words.¹⁴³ And at the very bedrock of Greek literature there are talking animals that remind

men of their mortality; not a bird, but Xanthos, one of his chariot horses, is empowered by Hera to speak to Achilles and warn him of his impending death.¹⁴⁴ The talking bird that speaks prophecies at Lysos, then, would have been recognizable to someone with what we might identify as either Christian or pagan sensibilities, and may have been informed by either tradition; this feature adds to the ambiguity of the passage.

Sacred Vessels

The ambivalence inherent in the sources and the significance of its various elements become critical at the climax of the Lysos episode. The circumstances and features of what must be taken as a startling manifestation of divine presence seem to be open to a reading informed by either Dionysiac materials or the Christian scriptures, or both. Alexander’s visit to the Lysos temple culminates in a strange incident. He admires the remarkable vessels he finds in the temple precincts, both great gold-embossed mixing bowls (κρατήρας χρυσοτορνεύτους) and exquisite drinking cups (ποτήρια) lathe-turned out of stone. Alexander orders his men to make camp and enjoy themselves in feasting; apparently they used the vessels of the temple at their feast, since Alexander can report the capacity of the mixing bowls because they were “measured out” at dinner (ἐξεμετρήσαμεν ἐν τῷ δείπνῳ). But as they settle down to dine, a thunderous noise as of various musical instruments erupts and the mountain smokes as if struck by lightning. Terror-stricken, Alexander and his men leave the place.

The first question must be, what provokes this display of divine anger, for surely we can presume that it is anger, and not simply a neutral epiphany, because it sends Alexander, who had stood boldly in the presence of Serapis,¹⁴⁵ scurrying away in fear. Dionysus, the god who seems to be found in the temple, is known to strike terror into the heart of an army and cause men to flee before his Bacchae,¹⁴⁶ but nothing seems to have been done to anger him on this occasion.¹⁴⁷ On the con-

140 Matt. 3:16–17; Mark 1:10–11; Luke 3:22; John 1:32.

141 Acts 2:1–13.

142 Hdt., 2.55; cf. Strabo, 7 FF 1, 2; Philostr., *Imag.* 2.33.1. See Lloyd, *Herodotus, Book II: Commentary 1–98*, 255–61; T. Harrison, *Divinity and History: The Religion of Herodotus* (Oxford, 2000), 127–28, 176; R. Stoneman, *The Ancient Oracles: Making the Gods Speak* (New Haven, 2011), 57–58.

143 *Al. Rom.* 1.8. Stoneman, *Romanzo di Alessandro*, 1:486–88.

144 Hom., *Il.* 19.404–23.

145 *Al. Rom.* 3.24.

146 Eur., *Bacch.* 303–5, 734–35, 764–65.

147 Arrian (*Anab.* 4.8.2, 9.5) reports that on the occasion of the murder of Cleitus, the soothsayers suggested that Alexander might have incurred the wrath of Dionysus by neglecting to sacrifice to

trary, Alexander and his men seem to be in accord with the god as they intend to hold a sumptuous banquet, and we would expect Dionysus to make his benign presence felt in the feast as a celebration of his gifts to man. Certainly, when Alexander's soldiers feasted on Mount Meros, the sanctuary of Dionysus above Nysa, they were supposed to have been possessed by the god and raved in his honor.¹⁴⁸ The close association of the descriptions of the temple vessels and the terrifying manifestation of divine presence suggests that there is some causal connection between these two aspects of the narrative. Alexander quelled the movement of the man on the couch and avoided facing his wrath when he refrained from removing the birdcage and the light from the temple because of the sanctity his friends indicated, but he and his men appear to bring about the portents of divine wrath by using the vessels found at the temple, and so sacred vessels, at their banquet.

Sacred vessels reserved for the use of the gods were by no means unknown among the Greeks. When in the *Iliad* Achilles was about to make his prayer for the victory and safe return of Patroclus, he took from his treasure chest a cup (δέπας) from which only he of all men drank and only Zeus of all the gods received libations, scoured it clean, poured out an offering, and prayed to the father of gods and men.¹⁴⁹ According to Philostratus, Apollonius of Tyana delivered a lecture in Athens on libations and encouraged his audience to keep the cup (τὸ ποτήριον) set aside for this purpose and unsullied by normal use.¹⁵⁰ Philostratus uses the same word for the special cup as is found in the Lysos passage, although this is a common word for drinking cups, but the lore of the Greeks offered no dramatic

and memorable story of the defilement of such sacred vessels.¹⁵¹ The Bible, however, did.

The account of the feast of Belshazzar, in the Book of Daniel, seems to provide a model for the events at Lysos and to explain why they transpire as they do.¹⁵² Belshazzar holds a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles, wine is served, and in his cups Belshazzar orders that the vessels his father Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem be brought so that he and his guests may drink from them. The revelers drink wine from the sacred vessels, and as they do they praise their "gods of gold and of silver" and of other stuff. Suddenly a disembodied hand appears and writes on the palace wall, to the consternation of the king. Daniel reveals that the hand has come from the presence of God and the message declares the judgment and the end of the Babylonian kingdom. As in the Lysos interpolation, a king leads his followers in a feast; he uses, or misuses, vessels that belong to a temple; and in consequence the uncanny signs of divine indignation manifest themselves quite obviously and terrify the banqueters.

The correspondences are apparent not only in broad outline, but also in detail. Belshazzar entertains his nobles at a banquet (δείπνον), just as Alexander orders a banquet (δείπνον) to be served at Lysos.¹⁵³ The first characterization of Belshazzar's feast is that there is wine, and Belshazzar's imbibing the wine seems to lead to his desecration of the temple vessels; the prominence of wine in the story may have invited comparison with a situation involving Dionysus, the wine god.¹⁵⁴ (Babylon is also connected to wine in the Alexander tradition; Curtius states that the Babylonians were addicted to wine and drunkenness even more than the

the god on his holiday. The Lysos episode does not seem to allude to this incident, however, since the divine wrath is manifested before Alexander has really had an opportunity to make an offering to Dionysus.

148 Arr., *Anab.* 5.2.7–3.4; Curt., 8.10.15–18; Just., *Epit.* 12.7.8.

149 *Il.* 16.220–32. On libations generally, see W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. J. Raffan (Oxford, 1985), 70–73.

150 Philostr., *VA* 6.20.1. See T. Schirren, *Philosophos Bios: Die antike Philosophenbiographie als symbolische Form; Studien zur Vita Apollonii des Philostrat* (Heidelberg, 2005), 229; T. Schirren, "Irony Versus Eulogy: The *Vita Apollonii* as Metabiographical Fiction," in *Theios Sophistes: Essays on Flavius Philostratus' Vita Apollonii*, ed. K. Demoen and D. Praet (Leiden, 2009), 166–68.

151 Curtius (5.6.5) does note that in the destruction of Persepolis, Alexander's men destroyed a number of precious vessels with pick-axes (*dolabris pretiosae artis vasa caedebant*), and the archaeological remains indicate that these vessels, like some of those imagined at Lysos, were made of stone, but Curtius never suggests that this was an occasion for divine wrath, nor is there any hint that the fact that the vessels of Persepolis were made of stone entered the literary record; see E. Schmidt, *Persepolis*, vol. 2, *Contents of the Treasury and Other Discoveries* (Chicago, 1957), 53–56, 81–91; F. Holt, *The Treasures of Alexander the Great: How One Man's Wealth Shaped the World* (Oxford, 2016), 80, 83–84.

152 Dan. 5.

153 Dan. 5:1. A. Rahlfs, *Septuaginta*, 9th ed. (Stuttgart, 1935).

154 Dan. 5:1–2.

Persian kings and their nobles.¹⁵⁵) Belshazzar and his guests “drank wine and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone,” so his feast is also a celebration of their false gods and the story as a whole is concerned not only with impiety, but also with idolatry; we might presume that a feast held in the precincts of a temple identified with Dionysus was also supposed to be in honor of the god, especially a god like Dionysus, and the story of Lysos certainly raises questions about the nature and the power of the traditional gods.¹⁵⁶ At Lysos there are unmistakable indications of a divine presence, and Daniel confirms that the hand was sent “from the presence” (ἐκ προσώπου) of God.¹⁵⁷ A single word (φοβηθέντες) must convey the frightened reaction of Alexander and his men to the portents they witness, but it corresponds to the effect the apparition of the hand has on Belshazzar and his courtiers, who are visibly shaken: “Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.”¹⁵⁸

Nor do we have to rely on striking narrative similarities to guess that the redactor of the β recension may have been aware of the story of Belshazzar’s feast; there is evidence that the vessels seized by Nebuchadnezzar were on his mind. In the α recension Alexander comes upon the tomb of Cyrus in Persia, and his discovery of the tomb of Nebuchadnezzar, adorned with the vessels from the temple in Jerusalem, is added to this passage in the β recension. Indeed, Alexander encounters Nebuchadnezzar’s grave first among the “tombs of the Persians”.¹⁵⁹

εἶδε δὲ καὶ τὸν Ναβονασάρου τάφον τοῦ κεκλη-
μένου Ναβουχοδονόσωρ Ἑλλαδικῇ φωνῇ καὶ τὰ
ἀναθήματα τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐκεῖ κείμενα καὶ τοὺς
κρατῆρας τοὺς χρυσοῦς ὡς ἡρώων εἶναι τὴν θέαν.

155 Curt., 5.1.37; ed. C. Lucarini, *Q. Curtius Rufus, Historiae* (Berlin, 2009), 108–9: *Conviviales ludi tota Perside regibus purpuratisque cordi sunt, Babylonii maxime in vinum et, quae ebrietatem sequuntur, effusi sunt.*

156 Dan. 5:4, 23.

157 Dan. 5:24 (Theod.).

158 Dan. 5:6, 9.

159 *Al. Rom.* (β) rec. 2.18.1; ed. Bergson, *Alexanderroman, Rezension β*, 106–7. See Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses*, 255; B. Garstad, “Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander in the *Excerpta Latina Barbari*,” *Iraq* 78 (2016): 41–42.

And he saw the tomb of Nabonasar, called Nabouchodonosor in Greek speech, and the votive offerings of the Jews placed there and the golden bowls, as if they were the evidence of heroes.

It is particularly remarkable that whereas the Book of Daniel, following the regular usage of the Septuagint, refers to the vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar with a generic term (σκεύη),¹⁶⁰ here the *Romance* specifies these same vessels as golden mixing bowls (τοὺς κρατῆρας τοὺς χρυσοῦς) and speaks of other sacred objects set up in a certain place (τὰ ἀναθήματα . . . ἐκεῖ κείμενα). The vessels from the temple in Jerusalem are described in the *Romance* in terms much closer to those used for the vessels at the Lysos temple, which are said to be “mixing bowls chased with gold set up there” (ἐκεῖ κειμένους κρατῆρας χρυσοτορνεύτους). The use of such similar terms for the sacred vessels of the Jews, especially in favor of the term found in the Bible, almost unavoidably insists upon a relation between these vessels and the ones found at Lysos. Furthermore, the enigmatic description of the temple vessels at Nebuchadnezzar’s tomb, “as if they were evidence of heroes” (ὡς ἡρώων εἶναι τὴν θέαν), suggests that the presence of similar vessels at the Lysos temple is to be understood to signify the same thing, namely that they belong to one of the heroes, the worshipful dead, and so tell us something about the condition of the man on the couch. Perhaps he is no more alive than Nebuchadnezzar.

Mysterious Noises and a Smoking Mountain

When we turn to the features of the divine manifestation, the ambivalence is just as evident, if not more so. We can find parallels to the sudden sound, the smoking mountain, the lightning, and the reaction they cause in epiphanies of Dionysus, but we can also identify definite parallels in one of the outstanding manifestations of the presence of God in the Bible.

The eruption of a mysterious sound of musical instruments with a clear association with Dionysus can certainly be found elsewhere. In the middle of Antony’s last night in Alexandria, all of a sudden (αἰφνίδιον)

160 Dan. 5:2, 3, 23. Cf. 2 Kings (4 Kingdoms) 24:13, 25:14; 2 Chron. 36:7, 18, 19; Ezra 1:7; Jer. 52:18. 2 Kings (4 Kingdoms) 25:14–15 also refers to the bowls taken as τὰς φιάλας.

the sounds of many different instruments, along with Bacchic cries and the leaping of Satyrs, were heard as if they were leaving the city; Plutarch reports that the sign was interpreted to mean that Antony was being deserted by the god with whom he felt the greatest affinity and attachment, that is, Dionysus.¹⁶¹ Ovid has the daughters of Minyas, who have offended Bacchus by remaining at their domestic tasks and rejecting his revels, suddenly assailed by the sounds of unseen musical instruments (*cum subito non adparentia raucis / obstrepere sonis*), drums (*tympana*), flutes, and cymbals, before their weaving is turned into ivy and grape vines, and they themselves are transformed into bats.¹⁶² According to Pomponius Mela, those who enter the inner recesses of the Corycian Cave in Cilicia are terrified by a miraculous sound of cymbals and a great din of rattling sounds.¹⁶³ It is not merely said that these sounds have some supernatural source (*divinitus*); Pomponius affirms that the whole cave is truly holy and rightly thought to be the habitation of the gods, as is clearly shown by a divine presence.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the consequence of this sanctity is that it excites fear; the sounds in the cave terrify (*terret*) visitors and further within there is a place more frightening still, and so unknown.¹⁶⁵ The phenomenon of the uncanny sounds and their fearful effect is consistent with the Lysos episode, and so presumably is their cause, that is, a manifestation of the divine presence. The association of the Corycian Cave with Dionysus may not be altogether clear until we turn to Macrobius, who reports that the rites of Bacchus are celebrated every other year on Mount Parnassus, where the frolics of Satyrs are seen and their voices heard, and the clash of cymbals is heard as well.¹⁶⁶ The sound

is definitely Dionysiac, suggesting that the sounds in the cave in Cilicia are too, and both of these strange noises seem to be alluded to by the sound “like a mighty thundering . . . of a multitude of cymbals” (ὥσπερ βροντῇ βιαία . . . κυμβάλων πλήθους) at Lysos.

Other aspects of the divine manifestation at Lysos, some of the specific instruments mentioned, the thunderbolt, and perhaps even something like the smoking mountain, are all associated with Dionysus, particularly in Euripides’ *Bacchae*.¹⁶⁷ The worship of Dionysus on the mountain is carried out by the Bacchantes to the beat of the drums (τύμπανα). Using other names that refer to the instrument’s construction from a stretched hide, the play traces the tradition of the drum played by the Corybantes at the birth of Zeus down to the Maenads, and Pentheus threatens to silence the din of their drums.¹⁶⁸ The beat of the drum was accompanied by the strains of the pipes (αὐλοὶ) in the revels of the Bacchae, and the “laughter of the flute” (αὐλοῦ γέλασαι) is called the gift of Dionysus.¹⁶⁹ The association of this array of musical instruments with Dionysus was still current in late antiquity, and Nonnus refers to Bacchus arriving to the sound of flute (αὐλός), drumbeat (βοεῖης τυπτομένης), clashing cymbal (χαλκόκροτος ἤχῳ), and fife (καναχὴ σύριγγος).¹⁷⁰ The thunderbolt is associated with Dionysus’s fundamental identity as the god of wine as early as the poetry of Archilochus, who speaks of his ability to sing the dithyramb to Dionysus while his “wits are thunderbolted with wine” (οἶνωι συγκεραυνωθεὶς φρένας).¹⁷¹ In Euripides’ play the thunderbolt (κεραυνός) is first associated with Dionysus through his premature birth from Semele, who gave birth when she was struck by

161 Plut., *Ant.* 75.3–4.

162 Ov., *Met.* 4.391–93; see Otto, *Dionysus* (n. 13 above), 93.

163 Pompon., 1.13.73; ed. A. Silberman, *Pomponius Mela: Chorographia* (Paris, 1988), 21: *terret ingredientibus sonitu cymbalorum diuinitus et magno fragore crepitantium*. See Kerényi, *Dionysos* (n. 105 above), 45–46.

164 Pompon., 1.13.75; ed. Silberman, *Pomponius Mela*, 22: *totus autem angustus et uere sacer, habitarique a diis et dignus et creditus, nihil non uenerabile et quasi cum aliquo numine se ostentat*.

165 Pompon., 1.13.74; ed. Silberman, *Pomponius Mela*, 21–22: *intra spatium est magis quam ut progredi quisquam ausit horribile, et ideo incognitum*.

166 Macrobi., *Sat.* 1.18.5; ed. J. Willis, *Ambrosii Theodosii Macrobii Saturnalia* (Leipzig, 1970), 101: *in hoc monte Parnasso Bacchanalia alternis annis aguntur, ubi et Satyrorum, ut adfirmant, frequens*

cernitur coetus et plerumque voces propriae exaudiuntur, itemque cymbalorum crepitus ad aures hominum saepe perveniunt.

167 On the reception and appropriation of the *Bacchae* throughout antiquity, see C. Friesen, *Reading Dionysus: Euripides’ Bacchae and the Cultural Contestations of Greeks, Jews, Romans, and Christians* (Tübingen, 2015).

168 Eur., *Bacch.* 59, 153–65; drum (βυσσότονον κύκλωμα) of the Corybantes: 120–34; Pentheus’s threat concerning the drumbeat (βύρσης κτύπου): 513. See E. Dodds, *Euripides, Bacchae*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1960), 70–71, 83–84, where drums are described as characteristic of the orgiastic cults of Dionysus, Rhea, and Cybele.

169 Eur., *Bacch.* 128, 380, cf. 153–65.

170 Nonnus, *Dion.* 2.4.151–54.

171 Archil. F 120 = Ath., *Deip.* 4 (628B); ed. M. West, *Delectus ex Iambis et Elegis Graecis* (Oxford, 1980), 50.

the thunderbolt of Zeus, but comes to be a mark of Dionysus himself.¹⁷² He calls down thunder and lightning on the palace of Pentheus, and in the awful messenger speech the voice of Dionysus is said to be accompanied by a flash of fire that joins heaven and earth; presumably a bolt of lightning, though not called a κεραυνός.¹⁷³ The smoking mountain is harder to find in the *Bacchae*. When Dionysus returns to Thebes he finds the ruins of his mother's house smoldering with the still-living flame of Zeus's fire, but while the smoldering (τυφόμενα) remains must be smoking, the emphasis here seems to be on the flame, and there is certainly never any indication of Mount Cithaeron smoking.¹⁷⁴ The smoking mountain at Lysos may recall the opening of the *Bacchae*, but its real source, as we shall see, seems to lie elsewhere. The effect of the manifestations of Dionysus's presence, as we have seen, can be very similar to the effect on Alexander and his men at Lysos: he inspires fear in armies and men flee before his followers.¹⁷⁵

The *Alexander Romance* had already established thunder and lightning as the signs of authentic deity, by which Dionysus specifically might be recognized. When Porus claims to be king not only of men but also of gods, and boasts that he can oppose Dionysus to him, Alexander replies that he is quite sure he will make war on a boastful barbarian, since the attributes by which a god might be known are obvious: "The whole world is not able to endure the single armament

of a god, the peal of thunder or the flash of lightning or the terror of the thunderbolt" (θεοῦ γὰρ μίαν πανοπλίαν οὐ δύναται ὑπενεγκεῖν ἅπαντα ἢ οἰκουμένη, βροντῆς ἡχισμόν ἢ ἀστραπῆς φωτισμόν ἢ κεραυνοῦ ὀργήν).¹⁷⁶ Thunder and lightning are to be understood to indicate a manifestation of divine power. And Alexander refers to the gods generally, but Porus has mentioned Dionysus in particular, so the reader is further inclined to associate thunder and lightning with Dionysus. The *Romance*, moreover, had associated thunder and lightning with Alexander's own enigmatic relation to the divine. When Olympias delivers her child, as he drops to the earth, there is thunder and lightning, along with an earthquake.¹⁷⁷

The *salpinx*, or trumpet, mentioned as one of the musical instruments heard at Lysos, seems to have been a distinctly Dionysiac instrument. It was played in processions devoted to Dionysus.¹⁷⁸ And at Argos Dionysus was said to be summoned "out of the water," presumably the Lernaean Swamp where Perseus had thrown his lifeless body, by the blast of trumpets (ὕπὸ σαλπίγγων).¹⁷⁹ It is tempting, then, to relate the sound of the trumpet at Lysos to the apparent resuscitation of the man on the couch, but we must note that whereas Dionysus is recalled to life *by* and so *after* the trumpet blast, the figure on the couch is aroused *before* the trumpet is heard; and that while Dionysus at Argos is resuscitated by the performance of a ritual, the man at Lysos stirs not as a result of a ceremony, but on account

172 Eur., *Bacch.* 6, 88–93, 596–99. Dodds, *Euripides, Bacchae*, xxxii, 151, notes an association of Dionysus especially with lightning, which occurs in other poets: Pindar, fr. 61.12 (70b.15 Snell); Oppian, *Cyn.* 4.301–3. According to Herodotus (4.79.2), when the Scythian king Scyles was about to be initiated into the mysteries of Bacchic Dionysus he received a divine omen: "the god" hurled a lightning bolt against his house and burned it to the ground; this was apparently a warning from Dionysus, for Scyles' participation in the Bacchic mysteries had disastrous results.

173 Eur., *Bacch.* 594–95, 1082–83. Dodds, *Euripides, Bacchae*, 213, considers the identification of the φῶς σεμνοῦ πυρός as lightning a possibility.

174 Eur., *Bacch.* 7–8: δόμων ἐρείπια / τυφόμενα Δίου πυρὸς ἔτι ζῶσαν φλόγα. This fire seems to be rekindled in the destruction of Pentheus's palace, see Eur., *Bacch.* 623–24. Ovid (*Met.* 4.405) has the daughters of Minyas flee the punishment of Bacchus through smoky chambers (*fumida . . . per tecta*), but this smoke seems to result from the mysterious fires that flare up throughout their house, not necessarily divine presence.

175 Eur., *Bacch.* 303–5, 734–35, 764–65. See Dodds, *Euripides, Bacchae*, 109–10.

176 *Al. Rom.* (β) rec. 3.2.10; ed. Bergson, *Alexanderroman, Rezension β* (n. 5 above), 139. Alexander's response to Porus has the appearance of a reversal of the words of the Indian sages, as reported by Philostratus (*VA* 2.33), that even if Alexander had reached their hill he could not have taken it because, since they are beloved by the gods, he would have been repulsed by thunder and lightning, just as the Egyptian Dionysus and Heracles were when they attacked India.

177 *Al. Rom.* 1.12.9.

178 Plut., *Quaest. conv.* 4.6.2 (*Mor.* 671E). See Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride* (n. 107 above), 433 and n. 4; Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 173–75.

179 Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 35 (*Mor.* 364F) = *FGH Hist* 310 F 2: Ἀργεῖοις δὲ βουγενῆς Διόνυσος ἐπὶ κλην ἐστίν· ἀνακαλοῦνται δ' αὐτὸν ὑπὸ σαλπίγγων ἐξ ὕδατος ἐμβάλλοντες εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον ἄρνα τῷ Πυλάρχῳ· τὰς δὲ σάλπιγγας ἐν θύρσοις ἀποκρύπτουσιν, ὡς Σωκράτης ἐν τοῖς περὶ δσίων εἶρηκεν ("Among the Argives Dionysus has the name 'Bull-born', and they summon him up out of the water with trumpets once they have cast a lamb into the bottomless pit for the Guardian of the Gate, and they conceal the trumpets in thyrsos, as Socrates has said in his work on sacred things"). See Otto, *Dionysus*, 80, 162, 166; Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, 433–34; Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 180.

of a transgression, or the near-commission of one. There may be a distant echo of the role of the salpinx in Dionysiac ritual in the Lysos episode, but its strains are so attenuated as to be almost inaudible. The salpinx, moreover, was not associated exclusively with Dionysus. The Egyptian monks of the monasteries founded by Pachomius were summoned to their nighttime worship by the call of a salpinx, unmistakably a trumpet, since Jerome refers to a *tuba*.¹⁸⁰ Here too the salpinx signifies the divine presence, though it is rather more that the monks are summoned into the presence of God than that the god is called to make himself present. (As the thunder and lightning with their divine associations are attached to Alexander in the earliest versions of the *Romance*, in the latest, γ recension, when Alexander appears as Zeus, the sound of trumpets [σαλπίγγων φωναί], among other noises, is heard.¹⁸¹)

The salpinx is also heard on Mount Sinai. When God manifests himself on the mountain and Moses approaches his presence, the “sounds of the trumpet” (αἱ φωναὶ τῆς σάλπιγγος)—apparently of a supernatural origin, as at Lysos—grow louder and louder.¹⁸² This central biblical theophany has further remarkable analogies with the events at Lysos, particularly in terms of the signs of the manifestation of divine presence. It is made clear, though, as it is not in the *Alexander Romance*, that this is exactly what the signs indicate, that God is present to convey a message to the assembled people. God is repeatedly said to descend upon the mountain.¹⁸³ On the morning of God’s appearance there are noises and lightnings (ἀστραπαὶ) and a dark cloud on the mountain, in addition to “a great sound of a trumpet” (φωνὴ τῆς σάλπιγγος ἥχει μέγα).¹⁸⁴ Not a thunderbolt (κεραυνός), but lightning (ἀστραπή), the term that seems to be favored for such celestial phenomena in the Bible, marks the divine presence on Mount Sinai, much as it does on the mountain at

Lysos.¹⁸⁵ The most striking correspondence between Sinai and Lysos, however, comes with the description of the smoking mountain. The whole mountain at Lysos was said to be smoking (τὸ ὄρος ὅλον ἐκαπνίζετο) in words almost identical with those used to tell of the effect of God’s descent upon Mount Sinai in fire: “The whole mountain of Sinai was smoking” (τὸ δὲ ὄρος τὸ Σινα ἐκαπνίζετο ὅλον).¹⁸⁶ In each case, moreover, the smoking mountain is described in a simile: the smoke of Sinai rose “like the smoke of a furnace” (ὡς καπνὸς καμίνου), and the mountain at Lysos smoked as if Alexander and his men had been struck by lightning (ὡς περ κεραυνοῦ πολλοῦ πεσόντος ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς).¹⁸⁷ The comparisons are different, but the rhetorical techniques, as well as the vividness of the descriptions, are the same. And interestingly it is the sign of divine presence without any real Dionysiac counterpart that is presented in terms almost certainly derived from the Bible. The signs altogether, the noise, the lightning flashes, the sound of the salpinx, and the smoking mountain, also have the same effect at Sinai as they do at Lysos: the people of Israel were afraid (φοβηθέντες) and withdrew from the mountain.¹⁸⁸ The elements of the climax of the Lysos episode, the mysterious noise, the trumpet blast, the thunder and lightning, the smoking mountain, and the fear they cause, may almost all have their correspondences scattered throughout Bacchic lore, but they are found in a remarkably tight concentration in the biblical account of God’s descent upon Mount Sinai, and at least one phrase suggests that this must be a source for the Lysos interpolation.

Although we have been concentrating on what must have been one of its primary interests, the attestation of the presence of God, the story of the Israelites’

180 *Praecepta S. Pachomii* 3, 9; ed. A. Boon and L. Lefort, *Pachomiana Latina* (Louvain, 1932), 14–15, 171. See D. Chitty, *The Desert a City* (Oxford, 1966), 26; E. Williams, *The Bells of Russia: History and Technology* (Princeton, 1985), 7–9, 189–90.

181 *Al. Rom.* (γ) 1.2.6.8; ed. Stoneman, *Romanzo di Alessandro*, 1:294. This seems to be another passage in the γ recension borrowed from the ε recension; see *Al. Rom.* (ε) 10.2; ed. Trumpf, *Vita Alexandri*, 34.

182 Exod. 19:19, cf. 19:13, 16, 20:18.

183 Exod. 19:11, 18.

184 Exod. 19:16.

185 In the Septuagint, ἀστραπή (Exod. 19:16, Deut. 32:41, 2 Kings [4 Kingdoms] 22:15, Ps. 17 [18]:14, 76 [77]:18, 96 [97]:4, 134 [135]:7, 143 [144]:6, Wisd. of Sol. 5:21, Sir. 35 [32]:10, 43:13, Nah. 2:4 [5], Hab. 3:11, Zech. 9:14, Jer. 10:13, Epist. Jerem. 61, Ezek. 1:13, Dan. 10:6) appears rather more often than κεραυνός (Isa. 30:30, Job 38:35, Wisd. of Sol. 19:13, 2 Macc. 10:30), but in the Greek New Testament, while ἀστραπή (Matt. 24:27, 28:3, Luke 10:18, 11:36, 17:24, 24:4, Apoc. 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, 16:18) may be found, κεραυνός cannot.

186 Exod. 19:18, cf. 20:18.

187 Exod. 19:18.

188 Exod. 20:18. Cf. Exod. 19:16, where it is said that “the whole people in the camp trembled” (ἐπτοήθη πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ὁ ἐν τῇ παρεμβολῇ) at the signs of God’s presence. Alexander’s men at Lysos have likewise made an encampment (παρεμβολήν).

encounter with God on Mount Sinai, like the story of Belshazzar's feast, counts idolatry among the foremost of its subsidiary concerns. It is on this occasion, of course, that God delivers the Law to Moses, and the first of the Ten Commandments forbids polytheism and idolatry in no uncertain terms: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."¹⁸⁹ These principal commandments are given between the two descriptions of the signs of God's presence, before the people withdraw from the mountain, and so might seem somehow associated with the divine manifestation. But once the people withdraw and God gives Moses a more extensive body of laws to convey to them, he begins once again with an injunction against idolatry: "Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold."¹⁹⁰ This latter commandment, discussing the false gods in terms of the materials from which they are made, especially recalls idolatry as an aspect of Belshazzar's feast, at which the guests drank wine and praised "the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."¹⁹¹ We have seen that the story of Belshazzar's feast seems to inform the Lysos episode. Perhaps the instruments whose sound is heard at Lysos are intended to evoke another biblical incident, also from the Book of Daniel and chiefly concerned with idolatry, namely the story of the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar on the plain of Dura. At the sound of the cornet (σάλπιγξ), flute (σῦριγξ), harp (κιθάρα), sackbut (σαμβούκη), psaltery (ψαλτήριον), and dulcimer (συμφωνία), all the people are supposed to fall down and worship the image Nebuchadnezzar made.¹⁹² And all do, except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who for their faithfulness are delivered from the fiery furnace. The idolatry in this story is associated with the sound of six (or five in three of the four instances) instruments, three of which (σάλπιγξ, σῦριγξ, κιθάρα) recur in the terrifying sound at Lysos, that is, just as many instruments as those with Dionysiac associations. In different ways the Lysos episode seems to allude to biblical stories that are concerned with idolatry and false gods.

189 Exod. 20:3–5.

190 Exod. 20:23.

191 Dan. 5:4, 23.

192 Dan. 3:5, 7, 10, 15. On these instruments, see T. Mitchell and R. Joyce, "The Musical Instruments in Nebuchadnezzar's Orchestra," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London, 1965), 19–27.

In the Book of Exodus, God's presence on Mount Sinai, the signs of which are described earlier and seem to have inspired the *Romance's* Lysos episode, and the concern with idolatry are perhaps most intensely combined when, in Moses's absence, the people turn to worshipping the golden calf. And it is when "the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play" that the biblical narrative turns from describing the people's sin of idolatry to relating God's wrathful reaction to it: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves."¹⁹³ The Apostle Paul returns to precisely this point in the Exodus account, the people sitting down to eat and drink and rising up to play, when he urges the Corinthians against idolatry and quotes this verse in his letter to them.¹⁹⁴ This passage, redolent with the concerns that mark so many of the biblical incidents alluded to in the *Romance*, may also explain the timing of the manifestation of the divine presence in the Lysos episode. It is just as Alexander and his men recline or lie down to eat (ἐν δὲ τῷ κατακλιθῆναι ἡμᾶς τε καὶ τὰ στρατεύματα πρὸς εὐωχίαν ἐπὶ δεῖπνον) that the thunderous noise fills the air and the mountain begins to smoke. When the people sit down to eat and drink in their idolatrous festivities at Mount Sinai, we are reminded of the presence of God; just so, when Alexander and his followers are about to take their ease, partake of a meal, and celebrate the rites of a pagan god, the signs of what we can only identify as divine wrath manifest themselves. The Septuagint, moreover, offers an apprehension of the revels in the Israelite camp that might connect them to Dionysus specifically. When Joshua reports what he takes to be the noise of war in the camp, Moses replies that it is not the noise of battle or of flight, "but I hear the noise of those who begin [to partake] of wine" (ἀλλὰ φωνὴν ἐξαρχόντων οἴνου ἐγὼ ἀκούω); the Hebrew text refers to a noise of singing.¹⁹⁵

193 Exod. 32:6–7: καὶ ὁρθίσας τῇ ἐπαύριον ἀνεβίβασεν ὁλοκαυτώματα καὶ προσήνεγκεν θυσίαν σωτηρίου, καὶ ἐκάθισεν ὁ λαὸς φαγεῖν καὶ πιεῖν καὶ ἀνέστησαν παίζειν. Καὶ ἐλάλησεν κύριος πρὸς Μωυσήν λέγων Βάδιζε τὸ τάχος ἐντεύθεν κατὰ βῆθι· ἡγόμησεν γὰρ ὁ λαός σου, οὗς ἐξήγαγες ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου.

194 1 Cor. 10:7: μὴ δὲ εἰδωλόατραι γίνεσθε καθὼς τινες αὐτῶν, ὥσπερ γέγραπται· ἐκάθισεν ὁ λαὸς φαγεῖν καὶ πίνειν καὶ ἀνέστησαν παίζειν. *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th rev. ed. (Stuttgart, 2012).

195 Exod. 32:17–18.

Conclusion

Few late antique texts anticipate what we might call “empty readings,” that is, readings uninformed by other texts, especially canonical ones, and by a broader social context, and so readings that require texts to spell out their intention and make their meaning unmistakably explicit. The mind of the reader coming to the text is not supposed to be a *tabula rasa*. Rather, the texts of this time tend to expect readings informed by previous reading of considerable breadth, by a wide knowledge of the learning expected of a literate person, and by some perceptive experience of the world. And so they are texts that regularly allude to other texts and to an extensive realm of meaning, texts whose significance is often externally established. This is certainly true of the Lysos episode in the *Alexander Romance*, and as we have seen, this text exploits as sources and refers to other texts and ideas that are at least as often biblical as they are classical. This is also unsurprising in a late antique text; as C. S. Lewis said in discussing seminal texts more central to the medieval thought world, “It is characteristic of the age that more than one of the works I shall mention has sometimes raised a doubt whether its author was Pagan or Christian.”¹⁹⁶ The question, though, is not merely one of authorship, but perhaps primarily one of intention. What message is the Lysos episode supposed to convey?

At first glance, this interpolation seems to be open to an overall reading as ambivalent as the precedents of its various elements and their possible significance. It gives the impression of a certain evenhandedness, even reticence, and appears to be open to both pagan and Christian readings. There is nothing overtly Christian in the passage; indeed, practically all of the elements, and certainly those that are given a clear and overt significance, like the reliefs decorating the temple, might appear to be pagan. The exploitation of and allusions to stories in the Bible, evident only after some reflection and investigation, might be seen as Christian “contamination” in an essentially pagan text. We might see here the recognition by a pagan author of striking narratives and impressive details in an inescapably pervasive text, and a pagan borrowing from the Judeo-Christian vocabulary of the divine. Tacitus and Plutarch had both

noted the identification of the God of the Jews with Dionysus, and this may have led to Dionysus’s being said to manifest himself in the forms of the Jewish God.¹⁹⁷ (As Ory Amitay points out, both Tacitus and Plutarch laid particular stress in their identifications on the sounds and musical instruments associated with both Dionysus and the God of the Jews, an important aspect of the episode in the Lysos temple.¹⁹⁸) In that case, we would seem to have here an example of a late antique phenomenon described by Glen Bowersock in regard to the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus: “It is well known that Christianity borrowed liberally from the language and iconography of paganism, but it must again be emphasized that this was really a two-way street. Late paganism responded no less to the Christian environment in which it flourished.”¹⁹⁹ Or as Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui has put it: “Other late evidence reveals the Christianization of a paganism on the defensive that half-consciously adopted the forms of its rival in its own defense.”²⁰⁰ While this phenomenon is certainly evident in other texts, this category of pagan borrowing from Christianity may not be the proper one for the Lysos interpolation. Whereas Nonnus, as Robert Shorrock has demonstrated, alludes to Homer and

197 Tac., *Hist.* 5.5; Plut., *Quaest. conv.* 4.6 (*Mor.* 671C–672C). Neither Tacitus nor Plutarch himself endorses the view that the God of the Jews is Dionysus; Tacitus refers to what was supposed by some unnamed thinkers (*quidam arbitrati sunt*), and Plutarch sets this opinion in the mouth of one of the learned banqueters at the dinner that serves as the setting for his *Table-Talk*.

198 O. Amitay, “Dionysos in Jerusalem and the Historicity of 2 Macc 6:7,” *HTR* 110 (2017): 278.

199 G. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 1990), 44. In this same essay (49) Bowersock refers to “a contamination of Christian elements in pagan mythology” when discussing the apparent borrowings from Christian iconography in the Sepphoris mosaic. Bowersock has elsewhere described Nonnus’s characterization of Dionysus in the *Dionysiaca* in similar terms: “This construction of a late antique epic god of salvation is only one of many signs that Christian perspectives impinged just as powerfully upon pagan thought and imagery as pagan perspectives had earlier shaped Christian doctrine and iconography”; G. Bowersock, “Dionysus as an Epic Hero,” in *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus*, ed. N. Hopkinson (Cambridge, 1994), 162.

200 Herrero de Jáuregui, *Orphism and Christianity* (n. 110 above), 372–73. Herrero points to the identification of canonical texts and meditation upon them, the codification of a systemic paganism or Orphism, and a new stress on moral concerns as evidence of the Christianization of paganism, but also mentions the borrowing of themes and images.

196 C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge, 1964), 46.

Greek myth in his *Paraphrase of the Gospel of St. John* and borrows from the imagery and ideas of the Bible to tell the story of the pagan god in the *Dionysiaca*, and so engages in a dialogue across the religious and ideological divide, the author of the Lysos episode has taken up the cudgels in a long-standing dispute.²⁰¹ Biblical narratives and visions are not so much exploited to dress up a depiction of the capricious wine god as invoked to construct a contrast between Dionysus and the Christian God.

I would suggest that the ambiguity is really present, and intentionally so, but is only superficial; the Lysos episode tends toward an unequivocal impression. If it invites a pagan reading, it does so in order to lay a trap. The reader, having entered what appears to be a story about Dionysus and one of his temples, a story that seems congenial to a pagan sensibility, is beset by puzzles and problems whose solution can be disclosed only by a reading informed by Christian texts. The identity of the figure on the couch is a fairly simple puzzle, but the fact that he is unnamed sets the riddling tone and challenges the reader to unravel the further mysteries of the sapphire temple. In what state does the man on the couch lie there? What causes the fearsome manifestation of a supernatural presence?

The round temple, in form perhaps more recognizable as a tomb, points to an answer to the first question. And the answer seems to be confirmed by the way the man is laid out on a couch, covered by a shroud, just like a corpse. The presentation of the pagan gods as dead men and their temples as tombs is altogether in keeping with the arguments of Christian apologetic. The polemical thrust seems more pointed when the imaginary round sanctuary of Dionysus is set against the most famous round sanctuary of Christ, the Anastasis Rotunda of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher: the still-occupied temple or tomb is contrasted with the Rotunda that marks the empty tomb, and a quiescent Dionysus with the risen Christ. The man at Lysos does not appear to be completely lifeless, but the best he can manage is a sluggish twitch, not a resurrection. The contrast seems all the more pointed and purposeful in the context of the late antique effort,

observed by David Hernández de la Fuente, to recast Dionysus in the image of Christ as primarily a god of “salvation and redemption beyond death.”²⁰²

This initial contrast is admittedly implicit, and the imputation of it to the text, furthermore, seems to be challenged by the manifestation of a divine presence at Lysos. The divinity who manifests his power and terrifies Alexander and his men might seem at first to be Dionysus, since no other god has been introduced. But Dionysus has no reason to be angry, as Alexander refrains from despoiling his shrine. And the sanctity Dionysus bestows on the place is questionable; although the holiness of the temple is asserted, it is not the narrator nor Alexander as reporter who says “it is holy,” but his friends, and so the declaration of holiness stands at one remove, at least, from an authoritative confirmation. Alexander and his army, moreover, by sitting down to dinner and beginning the feast, are engaged in the worship of Dionysus. It is this act of—apparently misdirected—reverence that seems, in fact, to bring about the sudden divine manifestation. The timing and the distinctive signs of this theophany, which give every indication of being derived from biblical narratives, point in turn to the identity of the divinity manifesting his anger, the God of the Bible. The consistent concern with idolatry found in the biblical episodes to which the Lysos episode alludes compels us to understand the divine displeasure as directed against Alexander’s intended worship of a false god. The repeated appearance of wine in these same biblical episodes likewise helps us to understand the particular false god whose worship is prevented, and who is condemned, to be Dionysus. The scriptures had already established an opposition between the worship of Dionysus specifically and the True God, when it was recorded that in the time of the Maccabees the Jews were compelled to take part in the procession of Dionysus carrying ivy wands.²⁰³ And as a god whose prominence only grew in late antique paganism, Dionysus is hardly an unlikely target for a Christian polemical fiction of the time.

201 R. Shorrock, *The Myth of Paganism: Nonnus, Dionysus and the World of Late Antiquity* (London, 2011); cf. R. Shorrock, *The Challenge of Epic: Allusive Engagement in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus* (Leiden, 2001), 5, 210.

202 See D. Hernández de la Fuente, “Parallels between Dionysos and Christ in Late Antiquity: Miraculous Healings in Nonnus’ *Dionysiaca*,” in *Redefining Dionysos*, ed. A. Bernabé et al. (Berlin, 2013), 464–87. Analysis of the poetry of Nonnus along these same lines is also developed in idem, “*Bakkhos Anax*”: *Un estudio sobre Nono de Panópolis* (Madrid, 2008).

203 2 Macc. 6:7. See Amitay, “Dionysos in Jerusalem,” 265–79.

The allusions to Christian material and the indications of a Christian intent in the Lysos episode are subtle, but ultimately unmistakable. Perhaps they have gone unrecognized for so long because of a disinclination on the part of classical scholars to use the terms “subtle” and “Christian” in tandem to describe an ancient author. But perhaps it is because the author of this interpolation was so skillful in evoking a classical and thoroughly Greek atmosphere, something that fits into the rest of the *Alexander Romance*, as well as the biblical episodes that convey a not typically Greek message. Here is a passage

that seems to substantiate another of Bowersock’s characterizations of late antique literature: “The Hellenism of Christians could also be no less Hellenic in the sense of ‘pagan’ than it was in the sense of ‘Greek.’”²⁰⁴

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204 Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, 53.

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